

THE INFLUENCE OF SOFT SKILLS, INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON THE WORK READINESS OF STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS AT ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF RIAU

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of soft skills, internship experience, and social support on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau. The background of this research is driven by the increasing challenges of the modern labor market, which requires graduates to possess not only academic competence but also non-technical skills and relevant practical experience. The study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method conducted on 40 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The research instrument consists of a Likert-scale questionnaire, and the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with SPSS version 25. The results indicate that internship experience has a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness, suggesting that the more internship experience students gain, the higher their level of readiness for employment. Conversely, soft skills and social support were found to have no significant effect on work readiness. This finding implies that interpersonal skills and social support have not yet become dominant factors in enhancing students' preparedness to enter the workforce.

Keywords: soft skills, internship experience, social support, work readiness

1. Introduction

Unemployment remains a structural problem faced by many developing countries, including Indonesia. This condition reflects an imbalance between the available labor force and existing employment opportunities. According to Halawa et al., (2025), unemployment refers to a situation in which individuals who are part of the labor force are willing and able to work but have not yet obtained employment. The main contributing factors include low job skills, a mismatch between educational background and industry needs, as well as rapid changes in economic structure. The impact of unemployment extends beyond economic welfare, potentially leading to social and political problems such as rising crime rates and increasing social inequality (Syafira & Umam, 2024).

At the national level, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS RIAU, 2024) indicate that the Open Unemployment Rate (OUR) in Indonesia remains dominated by the younger population, particularly university graduates. A similar trend is evident in Riau Province, where the OUR in February 2024 was recorded at 3.85% and slightly decreased to 3.70% in August 2024. Although this decline shows a positive trend, it does not fully reflect adequate work readiness among university graduates. This phenomenon is also observable in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau, where some students voluntarily participate in internship programs even though they are not mandatory. This condition highlights the need to enhance work readiness through the strengthening of soft skills,

internship experiences, and sufficient social support from families, lecturers, and the academic environment

Soft skills encompass communication ability, responsibility, teamwork, and adaptability, all of which are essential for individual success in the workplace (Luthfiani & Wajdi, 2025). Internship experience provides students with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings and to understand professional culture and expectations (Yanto et al., 2025). Moreover, social support also plays a significant role in improving work readiness. According to Cohen and Wills (1985), social support refers to an individual's perception of receiving emotional, informational, or instrumental assistance from their surroundings, which can enhance self-confidence, reduce stress, and increase motivation for achievement

Research by Setiarini et al., (2022) found that soft skills and internship experience positively influence students' work readiness. Similarly, Tentama & Riskiyana, (2020) v found that social support contributes to improving individuals' adaptability and career readiness. Based on these findings, this study aims to analyze the influence of soft skills, internship experience, and social support on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau. The results of this study are expected to provide empirical insights that contribute to improving graduate quality and reducing unemployment among educated labor forces

2. Literature Review

Work Readiness

Work readiness refers to an individual's ability to adapt to the demands of the professional world in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. According to Makki (2015), work readiness encompasses physical, mental, and social conditions that enable a person to effectively fulfill their responsibilities within a work environment. It is not solely the outcome of formal education but is also influenced by experiences, training, and psychological preparedness. Setiarini et al., (2022) emphasize that work readiness represents a combination of technical abilities, self-confidence, work ethics, and interpersonal skills that allow individuals to adapt quickly to professional settings.

Dalam konteks mahasiswa, kesiapan kerja berarti sejauh mana mahasiswa siap untuk In the context of university students, work readiness reflects the extent to which students are prepared to enter the labor market after completing their studies. The level of readiness is shaped by various factors, including soft skills, internship experience, and social support from their surroundings. Setiarini et al., (2022) found that students possessing strong soft skills and relevant internship experience tend to exhibit higher levels of work readiness. Furthermore, social support from family, peers, and educational institutions plays an essential role in enhancing confidence and readiness to face workplace challenges. Therefore, work readiness can be viewed as the result of a holistic learning process that integrates personal, social, and professional dimensions

Soft Skills

Soft skills are a set of non-technical abilities that reflect emotional intelligence, communication skills, teamwork, and work ethics. According to Astuti et al., (2025) and Yanto et al., (2025), soft skills enable individuals to interact effectively with others and to adapt within dynamic work environments. The core components of soft skills include interpersonal communication, teamwork, time management, responsibility, as well as critical and creative thinking abilities.

Unlike hard skills, which are technical in nature, soft skills are universal and serve as a key determinant of career success in today's competitive era.

In the modern workplace, soft skills are often considered more crucial for success than technical abilities alone. Moore, (2023) highlights that communication, leadership, and teamwork are among the most sought-after competencies by employers during recruitment. Students with strong soft skills tend to adapt more easily, demonstrate a strong work ethic, and effectively solve problems through collaboration. Within the context of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau, the development of soft skills is essential for producing graduates who are not only academically competent but also professionally minded. Therefore, training in communication, leadership, time management, and critical thinking should be integrated into both the curriculum and extracurricular activities to enhance students' work readiness.

H1: Soft skills have a positive effect on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau

Internship Experience

Internship experience refers to a practice-based learning activity that provides students with the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real work settings. According to Yanto et al., (2025), internships serve as a transitional bridge between the academic environment and the professional world through hands-on field learning. They allow students to gain professional experience, understand organizational culture, and develop the practical competencies required in the workplace.

Halawa et al., (2025), emphasize that internship experience plays a crucial role in shaping work readiness, as it exposes students to job responsibilities, professional ethics, and time management. Furthermore, students who have participated in internships generally demonstrate higher levels of confidence and adaptability. However, the effectiveness of internships largely depends on factors such as the quality of supervision, relevance of the assigned tasks, and the duration of the program. Within the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau, internships are not yet mandatory for all students, resulting in limited practical exposure. Nevertheless, internship experience serves as an essential bridge to foster work readiness and enhance the competitiveness of graduates in the job market.

H2: Internship experience has a positive effect on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau

Social Support

Social support refers to the assistance an individual receives from their social environment, whether in the form of emotional, informational, or instrumental support. Cohen and Wills (1985) define social support as an individual's perception that they are loved, valued, and part of a caring social network. In the context of students, social support can come from family, friends, lecturers, or the academic environment. Such support plays an important role in enhancing motivation, boosting self-confidence, and reducing psychological stress when facing academic challenges and preparing for future employment.

Wahyuni et al., (2025) state that social support positively affects psychological well-being and individual performance. Similarly, Purser et al., (2025) and Tentama & Riskiyana, (2020) explain that students with higher levels of social support tend to exhibit better work readiness and career orientation. Moreover, social support can strengthen the influence of soft skills and internship experience by providing emotional security, moral encouragement, and confidence to adapt in professional settings. For students at the Faculty of Economics and Business,

Islamic University of Riau, social support represents a crucial external factor. Encouragement from family, active guidance from lecturers, and peer support collectively foster a positive environment that enhances students' preparedness for the workforce.

H3: Social support has a positive effect on the work readiness of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Islamic University of Riau.

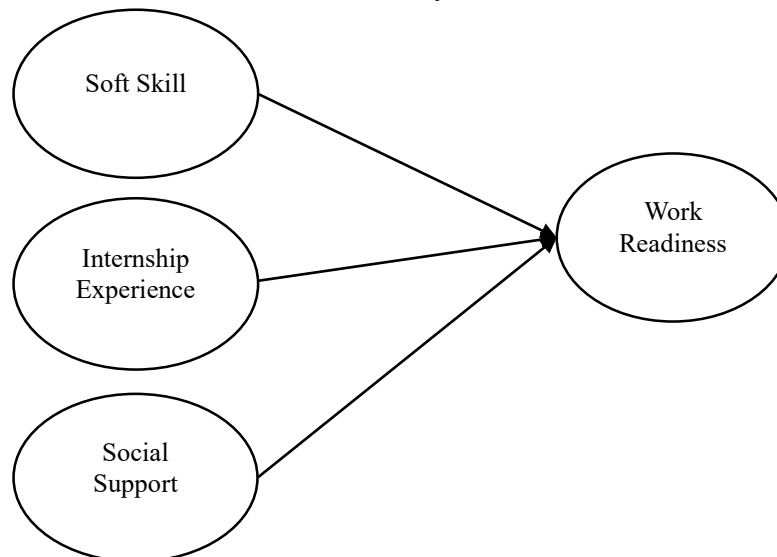


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Method

This study is an associative quantitative research aimed at analyzing the influence of soft skills, internship experience, and social support on students' work readiness. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau, located at Jl. Kaharuddin Nasution No. 113, Pekanbaru. The population included all students who had completed the internship program. Purposive sampling was employed based on criteria of students from the 2020–2023 cohorts in the study programs of Management, Accounting, and Development Economics, resulting in 40 respondents as the research sample.

The soft skills variable was measured through indicators of communication skills, responsibility, teamwork, and honesty (Mahasneh et al., 2015). The internship experience variable was assessed based on knowledge, skills, adaptability, and work attitude (Marie, 2016). The social support variable encompassed emotional, informational, and appraisal support received from the social environment (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Sarafino & Smith, 2014). Meanwhile, the work readiness variable was measured by critical thinking ability, adaptability, logical reasoning, and self-development motivation (Setiarini et al., 2022).

Data were collected through online questionnaires Google Form using a Likert scale. The data were subsequently analyzed using SPSS version 25 through stages of validity and reliability testing, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression analysis to examine both partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

4. Result and Discussion

The respondents in this study consisted of 40 students from the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau, who had completed the internship program. The characteristics of the respondents included study program, gender, and year of enrollment, as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Demographics Data

No	Characteristics	Number	Percentage
1	Study Program		
	Management	32	80%
	Accounting	6	15%
	Development Economics	2	5%
2	Gender		
	Male	5	12.5%
	Female	35	87.5%
3	Year of Enrollment		
	2021	37	92.5%
	2022	2	5%
	2023	1	2.5%
Total		40	100%

Source: author own creation 2025

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents were from the Management study program, totaling 32 students (80%), followed by Accounting with 6 students (15%), and Development Economics with 2 students (5%). This indicates that Management students had the highest level of participation in this study, which aligns with the largest active student population in the faculty. In terms of gender, most respondents were female, totaling 35 students (87.5%), while males accounted for 5 students (12.5%). This distribution reflects the general composition of students in the Faculty of Economics and Business at UIR, where female participation tends to be higher in academic and research activities. Regarding year of enrollment, most respondents were from the 2021 cohort, totaling 37 students (92.5%), followed by 2 students (5%) from 2022, and 1 student (2.5%) from 2023. This composition indicates that the majority of respondents had completed more than two years of study and possessed sufficient academic experience, including involvement in internship programs and career development activities organized by the faculty.

Classical Assumption Test

Normality Test

Before conducting the multiple linear regression analysis, a normality test was first performed to determine whether the data in this study were normally distributed. The purpose of the normality test is to ensure that the residuals of the regression model follow a distribution that approximates normality, allowing the analysis results to be interpreted validly. In this study, the normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) method with the assistance of SPSS version 25. The results of the test are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Normality Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		40
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	.27959727
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.126
	Positive	.110
	Negative	-.126
Test Statistic		.126
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.110 ^c

Source: Processing Data SPSS 2025

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.110, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the residuals in this study are normally distributed. This indicates that the regression model meets the normality assumption, allowing the analysis to proceed to the next stages, such as multicollinearity testing, heteroscedasticity testing, and multiple regression analysis (Latan & Ghazali, 2017)

Multicollinearity Test

The purpose of the multicollinearity test is to examine whether there is a strong correlation among the independent variables in the regression model. A good regression model should be free from multicollinearity, as high correlations between independent variables can lead to inaccurate estimation results. The test is conducted by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. According to Ghazali, (2018), the absence of multicollinearity is indicated when the Tolerance value is greater than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than 10. The results of the multicollinearity test in this study are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1,268	0,700		1,812	0,078		
	Soft Skill	0,034	0,160	0,031	0,214	0,832	0,803	1,246
	Internship Experience	0,534	0,150	0,526	3,560	0,001	0,763	1,311
	Social Support	0,113	0,073	0,210	1,562	0,127	0,922	1,085
a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness								

a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness

Source: Processing Data SPSS 2025

The results show that all independent variables have Tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values below 10, namely Soft Skills (Tolerance = 0.803; VIF = 1.246), Internship Experience (Tolerance = 0.763; VIF = 1.311), and Social Support (Tolerance = 0.922; VIF = 1.085). These values indicate that there is no high correlation among the independent variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model used in this study is free from multicollinearity, making all independent variables suitable for inclusion in the multiple linear regression analysis.

Heteroskedasticity test

Heteroskedasticity testing is conducted to determine whether the regression model exhibits unequal variances of residuals across observations. A well-specified regression model should be free from heteroskedasticity, as its presence can lead to inefficient and biased coefficient estimates. One common method to detect heteroskedasticity is by using a scatterplot test, which involves examining the distribution pattern of points between the residuals and the predicted values of the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018).

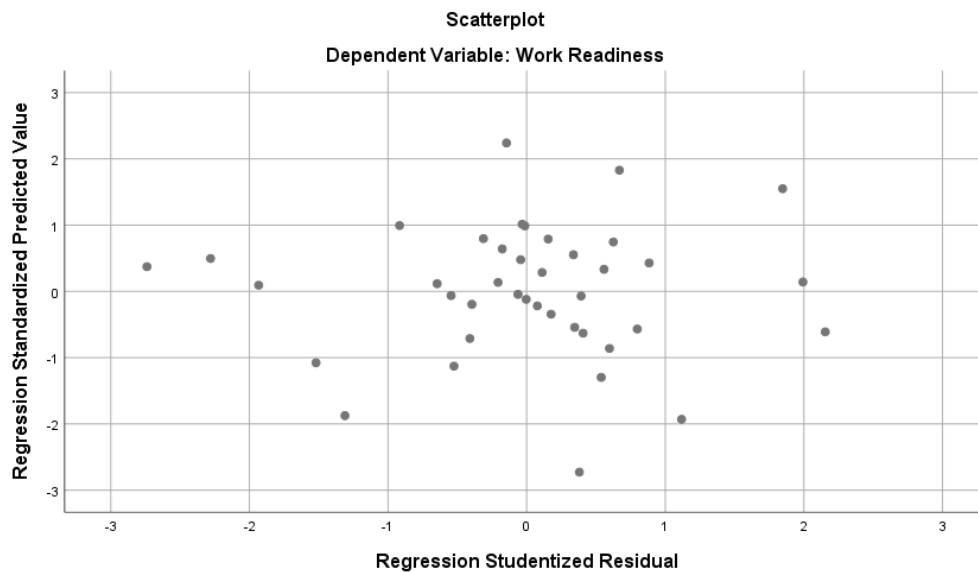


Figure 2. Heteroskedasticity test

Based on Figure 2, it can be observed that the data points are randomly scattered above and below the zero line without forming any specific or funnel-shaped pattern. This random distribution indicates that the variance of the residuals is constant, showing no signs of heteroskedasticity in the regression model. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model meets the homoscedasticity assumption, making the estimation results reliable and suitable for further analysis

Simultaneous Test (F-Test)

The simultaneous test, or F-test, is used to determine whether the independent variables in the research model namely soft skills, internship experience, and social support jointly have a significant effect on the dependent variable, which is work readiness. This test is conducted using the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) results from the multiple linear regression model. The test results are presented in Table 4 below:

**Table 4. F test Result
ANOVA^a**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.029	3	.676	7.986	.000 ^b
	Residual	3.049	36	.085		
	Total	5.078	39			

Source Processing Data SPSS 2025

Based on the results in Table 4, the F-value is 7.986 with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the three independent variables—soft skills, internship experience, and social support—simultaneously have a significant effect on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau. Therefore, the regression model used can be considered fit to explain the variations in the dependent variable

Hypothesis Test

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1,268	0,700		1,812	0,078
Soft Skill	0,034	0,160	0,031	0,214	0,832
Internship Experience	0,534	0,150	0,526	3,560	0,001
Social Support	0,113	0,073	0,210	1,562	0,127

a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness

Source Processing Data SPSS 2025

$$\text{Work Readiness} = 1.268 + 0.034(\text{Soft Skills}) + 0.534(\text{Internship Experience}) + 0.113(\text{Social Support})$$

The analysis results indicate that Soft Skills have a positive coefficient of 0.034 with a t-value of 0.214 and a significance level of 0.832 (> 0.05). This shows that soft skills do not have a significant effect on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau. In other words, improvements in interpersonal skills, communication, or teamwork are not yet sufficient to enhance students' readiness to enter the workforce. This condition may be caused by a gap between theoretical understanding and practical application of soft skills in real work situations, as well as limited hands-on experience in environments that require advanced interpersonal abilities. These results align with previous studies by Malbuyo et al., (2024) and Syafira & Umam, (2024), which found that soft skills need to be integrated with work experience to significantly influence career readiness.

Meanwhile, the Internship Experience variable has a positive coefficient of 0.534, with a t-value of 3.560 and a significance level of 0.001 (< 0.05), indicating that internship experience has a significant effect on students' work readiness. This suggests that the more experience students gain during internships through direct involvement in operational activities, professional work observations, or industry interactions the higher their readiness to enter the workforce. These findings support Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning theory, which emphasizes that experience-based learning significantly contributes to the development of professional competencies. The results are also consistent with studies by Astuti et al., (2025) and Sitompul et al., (2020), which affirm that internships enhance self-efficacy and work readiness.

On the other hand, the Social Support variable shows a positive coefficient of 0.113 with a t-value of 1.562 and a significance level of 0.127 (> 0.05), indicating that social support does not significantly affect students' work readiness. Nevertheless, the positive direction of the relationship suggests that support from parents, peers, lecturers, and the academic environment can serve as emotional and motivational backing, even if it does not directly increase work readiness. The insignificance may result from the general nature of the social support received (emotional or moral) that has not been specifically targeted toward concrete aspects such as career guidance or work training. These findings are in line with Cohen & Wills (1985) and

studies by Setiarini et al., (2022) and Sitompul et al., (2020), which state that social support tends to function as a buffer against stress rather than a direct factor influencing work readiness.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Test

**Table 6. Coefficient of Determination Test
Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics R Square Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.632 ^a	0,400	0,350	0,29101	0,400	1,678

Source Processing Data SPSS 2025

Based on the results of the coefficient of determination test presented in Table 6, the R Square value of 0.400 indicates that the independent variables Soft Skills, Internship Experience, and Social Support together explain 40% of the variation in the dependent variable, namely Work Readiness. The remaining 60% is influenced by other factors not included in this research model.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.350 reflects the level of adjustment after accounting for the number of independent variables in the model, suggesting that the regression model has a reasonably good predictive capability. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson value of 1.678 falls within the normal range (1.5–2.5), indicating that there is no autocorrelation among the residuals in this regression model. Therefore, the research model is considered appropriate and reliable for analyzing the influence of Soft Skills, Internship Experience, and Social Support on the Work Readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau.

Discussion

The findings from the partial test (t-test) indicate that individually, the variables of soft skills, internship experience, and social support exert differing influences on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau. The test results show that only internship experience has a positive and significant effect on work readiness, while soft skills and social support do not exhibit a statistically significant impact. This suggests that internship experience is the most dominant factor in preparing students for the workforce, as it provides opportunities to gain practical experience and develop competencies relevant to industry needs.

Theoretically, these results support the Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2013), which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in shaping an individual's career readiness. Through internship programs, students not only learn to apply academic knowledge but also develop professional attitudes, adaptability, and an understanding of work ethics. Thus, internships serve as a bridge between education and the real-world workplace.

Meanwhile, although soft skills and social support do not have a statistically significant effect, they still contribute positively to work readiness. This may be due to uneven levels of soft skills mastery among respondents or the fact that social support is more emotional than functional. In this context, social support may not yet be fully directed toward enhancing students' career readiness. These findings align with studies by Setiarini et al. (2022), which highlight that the influence of social support on work readiness depends on the quality and intensity of support

received by individual.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, this study concludes that soft skills, internship experience, and social support contribute to the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Islamic University of Riau, albeit with varying degrees of influence. Internship experience has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness, indicating that direct engagement in the workplace enhances practical understanding, adaptability, and self-confidence in entering professional environments. Conversely, soft skills and social support do not exhibit a significant effect, although both remain conceptually important in supporting work readiness through the development of character, work ethics, and emotional stability.

These findings underscore that students' work readiness is determined not only by academic factors but also by practical experience and a supportive social environment. Therefore, higher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen the synergy between academic curricula, soft skills development programs, and internship experiences aligned with industry needs to produce graduates who are more competent and fully prepared for the workforce

Limitation

Several technical limitations should be noted in this study. First, data collection was conducted within a limited time frame, which may not fully represent the overall conditions of the respondents. Second, the research instruments were distributed online, which opens the possibility of perception bias or differences in the interpretation of the items presented. Third, data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression without further testing or employing more complex modeling approaches, rendering the findings descriptive and limited to the context of the analysis used.

As a recommendation, future research is expected to expand the respondent scope with a longer data collection period, employ a combination of online and offline methods to enhance the validity of responses, and consider more in-depth analytical approaches such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS) to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among variables.

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