



SELF-MANAGEMENT AND WORK READINESS AMONG BACHELOR'S DEGREE FRESH GRADUATES

MANAJEMEN DIRI DAN KESIAPAN KERJA DI KALANGAN LULUSAN SARJANA BARU

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Abstract

A graduate is generally expected to possess stronger competencies than a non-graduate, particularly at the undergraduate level, where higher education should foster greater competitiveness and work readiness to meet industry standards. However, many fresh graduates report feeling unprepared to enter the workforce, and employers frequently perceive them as lacking essential readiness for work. This study aims to examine the relationship between self-management and work readiness among fresh graduates of undergraduate programs. The proposed hypothesis states that there is a positive relationship between self-management and work readiness. The study involved 120 fresh graduate participants. Research data were collected using the Work Readiness Scale (reliability coefficient = 0.883) and the Self-Management Scale (reliability coefficient = 0.900). Data analysis was conducted using the Product Moment correlation technique. The results show a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.846$ with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.050$), indicating a significant positive relationship between self-management and work readiness among fresh graduate undergraduate students.

Keywords : Work readiness, self management, fresh graduates, career preparation.

Abstrak

Lulusan sarjana umumnya dianggap memiliki kemampuan yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan individu yang bukan lulusan perguruan tinggi. Semakin tinggi tingkat pendidikan, khususnya pada jenjang sarjana, diharapkan semakin besar pula daya saing dan kesiapan kerja untuk memenuhi standar yang dibutuhkan di dunia kerja. Namun, pada kenyataannya banyak lulusan perguruan tinggi—terutama fresh graduate—yang merasa belum siap memasuki dunia kerja. Di sisi lain, sejumlah perusahaan juga menilai bahwa fresh graduate belum memiliki kualitas yang memadai atau belum menunjukkan kesiapan kerja yang optimal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara self-management dan kesiapan kerja pada fresh graduate program sarjana. Hipotesis yang diajukan adalah adanya hubungan positif antara self-management dan kesiapan kerja pada fresh graduate program sarjana. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari 120 fresh graduate. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan Skala Kesiapan Kerja dengan koefisien reliabilitas sebesar 0.883 dan Skala Self-Management dengan koefisien reliabilitas sebesar 0.900. Analisis data menggunakan teknik korelasi product moment. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan koefisien korelasi (r_{xy}) = 0.846 dengan $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.050$). Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang signifikan antara self-management dan kesiapan kerja pada fresh graduate program sarjana.



Kata Kunci : Kesiapan kerja, manajemen diri, lulusan baru, persiapan karier.

1. INTRODUCTION

A bachelor's degree is an academic credential obtained through higher education and is widely regarded as an initial step toward entering the workforce. Holding a bachelor's degree is a source of pride because many people assume that university graduates have greater opportunities to secure employment (Ratnawati, 2016). This paradigm aligns with the purpose of higher education as stated in Law No. 12 of 2012, Article 5(b) on Higher Education, which specifies that the objectives of higher education are: "to produce graduates who master branches of Science and Technology to serve national interests and enhance the nation's competitiveness." In line with this mandate, universities strive to produce graduates who are highly capable and ready to work in real-world settings, continuously meeting evolving labor standards (Ratnawati, 2016).

Fresh graduates—defined as individuals who have recently completed a bachelor's program, from the time of graduation up to two years afterward—generally do not understand what steps to take after being declared graduates by their universities (Carlson, 2007). Many fresh graduates are insufficiently prepared to enter the workforce. As a result, they often lack the competencies needed to compete effectively, and most are not yet able to meet existing labor market standards (Narsiti et al., 2021).

On the other hand, companies and organizations seek competent, compatible, and effective individuals to fulfill their human resource procurement functions (Priyono, 2010). This situation makes organizations increasingly selective in recruiting and selecting potential employees. Accordingly, firms tend to recruit candidates who possess relevant knowledge and skills, can keep up with technological developments, and demonstrate high competitiveness—attributes that reflect strong work readiness (Sulastiana & Sulistiobudi, 2020).

Work readiness is defined as an individual's capability to carry out tasks under particular situations and conditions with satisfactory results (Sofyan, 1993). Makki et al. (2015) define work readiness as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable fresh graduates to contribute productively to organizational goals. Pool and Sewell (2007) argue that work readiness refers to possessing occupational expertise, a comprehensive understanding, critical thinking ability, and positive personality characteristics, enabling individuals to make informed choices and secure suitable employment for success.

Pool and Sewell (2007) describe four dimensions of work readiness: (1) skills, referring to abilities acquired through training and experience that are essential for performing various tasks; (2) knowledge, representing theoretical foundations of learning that enable individuals to become experts in a field; (3) understanding, indicating an individual's capacity to comprehend familiar matters, retain them easily, and perform work satisfactorily while recognizing personal goals; and (4) personal attributes, such as work ethic, responsibility, time management, and related characteristics that drive individuals to achieve their potential.



Bachelor's degree holders are generally assumed to have greater capabilities than non-graduates. Higher educational attainment, particularly at the bachelor's level, should theoretically be associated with higher competitiveness and stronger work readiness to meet workplace standards (Latif et al., 2017). University graduates are expected to think innovatively, constructively, and creatively. They should also demonstrate high quality and initiative, rather than merely waiting for opportunities in the labor market to arise. In other words, creating employment and reducing unemployment are among the responsibilities that university graduates are expected to assume (Narsiti et al., 2021).

However, in practice, many university graduates—especially fresh graduates—feel unprepared to enter the workforce (Parerungan, 2018). This condition is consistent with global findings that identify a skills mismatch between higher education outcomes and industry requirements, which contributes to graduate unemployment (World Bank, 2020). In addition, research shows that many employers perceive fresh graduates as lacking practical skills and professional readiness, which directly impacts their employability (Tomlinson, 2017).

Intensifying competition and increasingly stringent labor standards make it difficult for bachelor's graduates, particularly fresh graduates, to be absorbed into the workforce (Latif et al., 2017). This is reflected in the rising number of unemployed bachelor's graduates over the past two years. The Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that the open unemployment rate increased by 0.47% 2022. In that year, the open unemployment rate increased by 0.47% in 2022. In that year, the open unemployment rate among bachelor's graduates reached 6.17% (884,796 individuals), up from 5.70% (824,912 individuals) previously (Bps.go.id). Bachelor's graduates thus represent one of the most dominant contributors to unemployment.

One important cause of unemployment among bachelor's graduates is a lack of soft-skill capacity beyond core academic competence. Many fresh graduates exhibit weak communication skills, and limited adaptability also prevents them from meeting increasingly strict labor market requirements. At the same time, they must compete with job seekers who possess work experience. Consequently, obtaining employment after graduation is a significant challenge for bachelor's fresh graduates (Nghie & Hien, 2020).

Based on these empirical conditions, the present study concludes that work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates remains relatively low. Work readiness is crucial for individuals entering the workforce, as many organizations currently seek competitive candidates in industrial settings. Individuals with strong work readiness tend to have confidence in their abilities, enabling them to apply skills and knowledge effectively, take responsibility for completing tasks, adapt to organizational changes, learn new skills, socialize with coworkers, and cope with workplace challenges (Sulastiana & Sulistiobudi, 2020).

According to Winkel and Hastuti (2007), factors influencing work readiness include: (1) intellectual capacity, namely the ability to achieve performance outcomes in which thinking plays a significant role; (2) interest, referring to an individual's tendency to be attracted to specific fields they find enjoyable; (3) knowledge and experience, namely information and



prior exposure related to a field of work; (4) physical condition, including physical characteristics such as height, hearing ability, and appearance; (5) personality, which provides an individual's distinctive characteristics (e.g., friendliness, sincerity, meticulousness); and (6) life values, which shape occupational choices and work performance.

From these factors, the present study focuses on self-management as a determinant of work readiness, derived from the personality domain. Self-management is widely defined as an individual's ability to regulate, direct, and evaluate their own behavior toward specific goals, a concept supported by social learning theory (Frayne & Latham, 1987). Jazimah (2014) further notes that self-management concerns personal regulation and reflects one's overall personality. Self-management can therefore be understood as the ability to organize and balance life effectively, encompassing the management of time, making informed choices, prioritizing interests, and maintaining both physical and mental well-being.

Azwar (2005) emphasizes that humans inherently possess control over thoughts, emotions, and actions. One manifestation of this human agency is the ability to self-manage (Gibson et al., 2012). Accordingly, self-management is selected as the independent variable in this study because work readiness is closely tied to cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of individuals (Cholik et al., 2022). Furthermore, few studies have specifically examined the correlation between self-management and work readiness, making this investigation particularly necessary.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) propose that self-management includes: (1) emotional self-control, the ability to regulate and maintain emotions; (2) transparency, reflecting honesty and integrity; (3) adaptability, flexibility in adjusting to situational changes; (4) achievement, motivation to improve performance to meet standards; (5) initiative, readiness to act and seize opportunities; and (6) optimism, the tendency to view challenges as opportunities.

Work readiness emerges from strong self-management and self-control, which motivate individuals to mobilize their capabilities to achieve success (Cholik et al., 2022). Consistent with this view, Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) explain that individuals with good self-management are generally optimistic and motivated to improve their performance to meet standards (self-motivation). Such motivation influences work readiness dimensions-skill, knowledge, and understanding—by fostering creativity, innovation, and critical thinking (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Primardiana (2013) states that work-ready individuals demonstrate competencies such as emotional self-control, self-development, achievement orientation, honesty and integrity, positive self-belief, commitment, initiative and proactivity, creativity, transparency (honesty and integrity), and initiative represent attributes that reflect work readiness.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) also note that individuals with good self-management tend to be adaptable and flexible in responding to changing situations. This supports Brady's (2010) view that work-ready individuals must be able to adjust to evolving workplace demands, whether predictable or unpredictable. Therefore, higher self-management is expected to be



associated with higher work readiness, and conversely, lower self-management with lower work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative design, utilizing psychological scales as the data collection method (Amelia et al., 2023). Two Likert-type scales were administered: a self-management scale and a work-readiness scale. The work-readiness scale was developed based on Pool and Sewell's (2007) theoretical dimensions and demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.883. The self-management scale was constructed using Kreitner and Kinicki's (2007) dimensions and showed a reliability coefficient of 0.900.

Participants were 120 bachelor's degree fresh graduates from both public and private universities. The sample was selected using simple random sampling. Hypothesis testing was conducted through Pearson's product-moment correlation to examine the relationship between self-management and work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates. Additional analyses employed an independent-samples t-test to identify potential differences between graduates from public and private universities. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis of hypothetical data indicated that the minimum score for work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates was 40 and the maximum score was 160, with a standard deviation of 20 and a mean of 100. Empirical data showed a minimum score of 89 and a maximum score of 168, with a standard deviation of 21 and a mean of 162. Additionally, the standard deviation was 14.07, and the mean was 121.53.

These descriptive results served as the basis for categorizing participants' levels of self-management and work readiness. For work readiness, 35 participants (29.20%) were categorized as high, 85 participants (70.80%) as moderate, and none (0%) as low. This indicates that most participants demonstrated a moderate level of work readiness. For self-management, 68 participants (56.70%) were categorized as having high self-management, 52 participants (43.30%) as having moderate self-management, and none (0%) as having low self-management, indicating that the majority had high self-management.

Pearson correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) of 0.846 with $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a positive relationship between self-management and work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates. In other words, higher self-management is associated with higher work readiness. Thus, the study hypothesis was supported. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.716, meaning that self-management accounted for 71.6% of the variance in work readiness. The remaining 28.4% may be attributed to other factors, such as intellectual capacity, interests, knowledge, experience, physical condition, and life values (Winkel & Hastuti, 2007).

These findings suggest that self-management is a crucial factor influencing work readiness among bachelor's degree fresh graduates. This is consistent with Tamrat (2019), who



emphasized that self-management can effectively regulate thoughts, time, and resources, leading to more efficient personal functioning (Gie, 2000).

Cholik et al (2022) also demonstrated that self-management contributes to improved work readiness. Work readiness is rooted in effective self-regulation, prompting individuals to apply their abilities optimally to achieve success. Hence, enhancing self-management should correspond with increased work readiness. Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) further explain that people with good self-management are optimistic and driven to improve performance to meet standards (self-motivation). Such motivation can strengthen work-readiness dimensions, including skills, knowledge, and understanding, by stimulating creativity, innovation, and critical thinking (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Additional analysis using an independent-samples t-test revealed $t = -0.094$ with $p = 0.926$, which is greater than 0.05, for work readiness, indicating no significant difference between public and private university fresh graduates. However, mean scores indicated slightly higher work readiness among private university graduates (mean = 113.04) compared to those from public universities (mean = 112.81). This contrasts with Shalsabila and Kadiyono (2019), who found higher work readiness among public-university graduates.

For self-management, the independent-samples t-test produced $t = 1.048$ with $p = 0.297$, which is greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference in self-management between graduates of public and private universities. Thus, both groups appear similarly capable in planning, focusing attention, and evaluating their activities to achieve goals. Although mean scores for self-management were slightly higher among public-university graduates (mean = 123.54) than private-university graduates (mean = 120.63), this aligns with Muzni and Nurlaila (2018), who reported no significant differences in self-control (a self-management aspect) between the two groups.

Overall, these results indicate that self-management has a significant positive relationship with work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates. Higher self-management corresponds with higher work readiness, and vice versa. Additionally, there were no significant differences between graduates from public and private universities in either work readiness or self-management. Individuals with strong work readiness tend to be confident in their abilities and able to apply skills and knowledge effectively, take responsibility, adapt to organizational changes, learn new skills, socialize with coworkers, and manage workplace challenges (Sulastiana & Sulistiobudi, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

The results indicate a positive relationship between self-management and work readiness among bachelor's fresh graduates. The correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) was 0.846 with $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, confirming that higher self-management is associated with higher work readiness. Therefore, the study hypothesis was supported.

This study suggests that bachelor's fresh graduates should focus on their goals, maintain optimism, develop self-motivation, avoid procrastination, and consistently complete tasks



effectively. Future researchers are encouraged to broaden the distribution of research instruments, as the sampling scope in the present study was limited.

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