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The Effect of Internship Experience and Psychological Capital on Student Job Readiness in Gresik Regency with Work Motivation as a Mediation Variable

Gita Fitria Anggi, Hadi Cahyono

Faculty of Economics and Business, Semen Indonesia International University

gita.anggi22@student.uisi.ac.id, hadi.cahyono@uisi.ac.id

Abstract

The rapid changes in the world of work require university graduates to have an optimal level of job readiness, especially in industrial estates such as Gresik Regency. The increasingly fierce competition and mismatch between graduate competencies and industry needs make the issue of student job readiness important for learning. The main purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of internship experience and psychological capital on the work readiness of students in Gresik Regency with work motivation as a mediating variable. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. Respondents were students in a questionnaire and processed using the Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) technique to test for direct and indirect effects. The results of the analysis showed that the readiness of the internship. In addition, these two variables also have a positive effect on students' work readiness. Work motivation was found to have a positive effect on job readiness and acted as a mediator linking internship experience and psychological capital to job readiness. These findings confirm that students' job readiness depends not only on practical experience during the internship but also on positive psychological conditions and work motivation. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Human Resource Management science, especially in understanding the factors that affect students' work readiness. From a practical perspective, the results of this research can be used as a reference for universities in internship programs and develop student competencies that are more in line with the needs of the industrial world.

Keywords: Internship Experience, Psychological Capital, Work Motivation, Job Readiness, Students.

1. Background

Changes in the world of work triggered by globalization and rapid technological advances have significantly changed employment and employer expectations of college graduates (Priyanto et al., 2025). In Gresik Regency, this need is increasingly visible considering the high rate of educated unemployment even though this area is a fairly large industrial area (Gresik Regency Central Statistics Agency, 2023). Based on data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Gresik Regency, the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) in 2022 reached 7.8% and decreased to 6.8% in 2023 (Central Statistics Agency of Gresik Regency, 2023). Despite the decline, this figure still reflects a major challenge in job creation efforts. For comparison, the unemployment rate in East Java Province was recorded at 4.88% in August 2023, which is clearly lower than the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) in Gresik Regency (Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, 2023). This data shows that unemployment in Gresik Regency is higher than the average unemployment rate at the provincial level, which indicates that the issue of job readiness in this area is not only a local issue but also important at a broader level.

Gresik Regency is known as one of the areas that has developed rapidly and plays a role as a strategic industrial area in East Java. This area is the center of the activities of various manufacturing companies, both national and multinational, especially in the cement, chemical, and other industrial sectors (Irianti & Niswah, 2021). However, based on data from Yuliyanto (2025), the unemployment rate in this region is still relatively high with details of 32,801 high school graduates, 7,107 junior high school graduates, and 6,372 undergraduate students. Which means that many students still experience a mismatch between the abilities they have and the demands of the company, so that job readiness is an increasingly important aspect to be studied. In addition, most companies in Gresik are capital-intensive industries that prioritize workers with high competence. This condition shows that in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, job readiness is an important aspect that must be possessed by prospective workers, especially students who will soon enter the professional world.

The Effect of Internship Experience and Psychological Capital on Student Job Readiness in Gresik Regency with Work Motivation as a Mediation Variable

Although various previous studies have discussed students' job readiness by highlighting the role of internship experience and psychological capital, these studies are generally still conducted partially and have not combined external and internal factors at the same time. In addition, research that specifically raises the context of industrial areas such as Gresik Regency is still relatively limited. In fact, along with the increasing level of competition in the world of work and changes in labor needs in the industrial sector, university graduates are required to have work readiness that is in line with the demands of the company both in terms of competence, professionalism, and other skills (Azky & Mulyana, 2024).

Student job readiness is understood as a multidimensional concept, which describes the level of ownership of attributes, attitudes, and abilities that individuals need to enter and adjust to the demands of the world of work. Through a systematic review of students and university graduates in Indonesia, Nugroho et al., (2024) explained that job readiness does not solely depend on the mastery of technical skills but is also influenced by personal character, work competence, understanding of the organization, and social intelligence. The results of the study indicate that there is still a gap between the competencies possessed by graduates and the needs and expectations of the industrial world, especially related to practical skills, communication skills, teamwork, and adaptability. Thus, student job readiness is one of the important indicators in evaluating the role of higher education in producing graduates who are in line with the needs of the workforce, especially in industrial areas such as Gresik Regency which demands human resources with a high level of competence and professionalism.

Internship experience is a form of practice-based learning that allows students to apply the knowledge gained during lectures to real working conditions so that it plays a role in improving job readiness. Pambajeng et al., (2024) stated that internship experience has a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness in facing the world of work. Through the implementation of internships, students can get to know the organizational culture, understand the demands of professionalism, and develop practical skills that are not fully acquired through the learning process in the classroom. In addition, the quality and length of the internship experience contribute to strengthening student competencies because the intensity of involvement in work activities can increase confidence, work attitude, and adaptability in the industrial environment. Therefore, internship experience can be seen as an external factor that has an important role in shaping student job readiness, especially for university graduates who will enter industrial areas such as Gresik Regency who need a competent and productive workforce.

Psychological capital is understood as a positive psychological resource that individuals have and has an important role in supporting students' readiness to enter the world of work. The concept of psychological capital consists of four main dimensions, namely self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience which together form self-confidence and individual readiness to face various work challenges. Amalia & Sa'id (2024) found that psychological capital has a positive and significant effect on student readiness because it is able to strengthen confidence, perseverance, and the ability to manage pressure and uncertainty during the transition from education to work. Students who have a higher level of psychological capital tend to show a more constructive work attitude, strong motivation, and good adaptability to the demands of the work environment. Thus, psychological capital can be positioned as a strategic internal factor in shaping student work readiness, especially for university graduates who will face the industrial world with an increasingly high level of competition and complexity.

Work motivation can be interpreted as an encouragement from within students that affects the level of willingness, enthusiasm, and readiness to enter the world of work while functioning as a mediating variable that connects external and internal factors to work readiness. Setiarini et al., (2022) explained that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on job readiness. These findings show that the effectiveness of internship experience in increasing job readiness will be more optimal if supported by a high level of work motivation, because motivation encourages students to utilize work experience as a process of self-development. Students with strong work motivation tend to have better mental readiness, work attitude, and professional behavior in facing the demands of the industrial world. Thus, work motivation can be seen as a psychological mechanism that plays a role in linking internship experience with students' job readiness, especially in the face of competition and increasing complexity in the world of work.

Based on this description, this research is very relevant in the context of Gresik Regency which although it is a large industrial center area, it still faces the problem of a fairly high Open Unemployment Rate. It is hoped that the results of this research will be a foothold to build synergy between students, universities, and industry in producing graduates who are ready to work, have high competitiveness, and are able to contribute to regional

and national development. In addition, this research is expected to be able to make an empirical contribution to the development of student job readiness studies through the integration of internship experience, psychological capital, and work motivation as mediation variables in the context of industrial areas.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach based on the philosophy of positivism as stated by Sugiyono (2019). The quantitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to obtain objective, measurable, and statistically analyzeable data to test the hypothesis that has been formulated. The type of research used is causality research or explanatory research, which aims to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between variables. The main focus of this study is to analyze the influence of internship experience and psychological capital on student work readiness, both directly and indirectly through work motivation as a mediating variable. This study is included in the category of causal associative research because it seeks to identify the relationship and influence between two or more variables. The object of the research is students who have or are participating in an internship program in Gresik Regency. This approach is considered relevant because students with internship experience are considered to have direct exposure to the world of work, so that they are able to provide an empirical picture of job readiness influenced by psychological factors, practical experience, and internal motivation in facing the world of work.

The population in this study is all students who have or are participating in an internship program in Gresik Regency. The selection of the population was adjusted to the purpose of the study, which was to examine the work readiness of students based on internship experience and psychological capital with work motivation as an intermediate variable. Because the population size cannot be known for sure, this study uses the purposive sampling technique, which is a sample determination technique based on certain criteria. The respondent criteria include active students for at least the fifth semester, having or are participating in an internship program for at least one month, domiciled or studying in Gresik Regency, and participating in internships carried out in the region. The determination of the number of samples refers to multivariate research guidelines according to Hair et al. (2019), which suggest the number of respondents to be at least five to ten times the number of research indicators. With a total of 17 indicators, the ideal sample number was set at 170 respondents. This number is considered adequate to ensure the results of statistical analysis that are stable, valid, and able to represent the research population more accurately.

This study uses two types of data sources, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of questionnaires to students who have internship experience in Gresik Regency. The questionnaire was structured based on research variables, namely internship experience, psychological capital, work motivation, and job readiness. This instrument is designed to collect empirical data relevant to the research objectives and test the hypotheses that have been established. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from various supporting sources such as reference books, scientific journals, and literature relevant to the research topic. The main data collection technique used a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The use of the Likert scale aims to quantitatively measure respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and views. This method was chosen because it is efficient in terms of time and cost and is able to reach a large number of respondents with a high level of reliability in quantitative research.

This study involves three types of variables, namely independent variables, dependent variables, and mediating variables. Independent variables consist of internship experience and psychological capital. Internship experience is defined as a student's practical learning process in the world of work that includes aspects of learning experience, personality development, work environment, and work engagement. Psychological capital reflects an individual's positive psychological condition consisting of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. The dependent variable in this study is student work readiness, which includes mental readiness, skills, maturity, intelligence, and self-development efforts. Work motivation acts as a mediating variable that connects independent variables with work readiness. Work motivation is measured through indicators of desire to enter the workforce, future expectations, environmental impulses, personal needs, and desire to grow. Operational definitions of variables are compiled to ensure each theoretical concept can be measured empirically through clear, systematic, and measurable indicators and question items.

The data analysis in this study uses an inferential statistical approach based on Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The stages of analysis include descriptive statistical analysis to describe respondent characteristics and answer patterns, as well as evaluation of outer models and inner models. The outer model test was carried out to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument through the testing of convergent

validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. Furthermore, the inner model test aims to evaluate the relationships between latent constructs through the determination coefficient (R-Square), the effect effect (F-Square), and the predictive relevance (Q-Square). Model fit testing was carried out using SRMR and NFI indicators to assess the model's suitability with empirical data. Finally, the path significance test using the bootstrapping technique was used to test the research hypothesis by looking at the t-statistical and p-value. The entire stage of this analysis is designed to ensure that the research model is valid, reliable, and has good predictive power.

3. Results

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to analyze the factors that affect students' job readiness. The research subjects are students with at least semester V who have participated in an internship program for at least one month in Gresik Regency. The selection of respondents was based on the assumption that students at that stage already have sufficient academic and practical experience to objectively assess job readiness. Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire compiled based on research variable indicators, namely internship experience, psychological capital, work motivation, and student job readiness. A total of 165 respondents met the research criteria and actively participated. The collected data was then processed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to answer the research objectives. This approach allows researchers to obtain an empirical picture of the relationships between variables while testing structural models developed based on career theory, especially Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).

The characteristics of the respondents are presented to provide an overview of the profiles of individuals who are the source of the research data. Based on gender, respondents were dominated by female students as much as 61%, while male students were 39%. This condition shows that women's participation in filling out questionnaires is relatively higher. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were in the age range of 21–22 years, with the age of 22 years as the largest group. This reflects that most of the respondents are of productive age and in the transition phase from the world of education to the world of work. Based on domicile, as many as 96% of respondents live in Gresik Regency, while the rest come from outside the region but have internship experience in the region. Overall, the characteristics of the respondents showed that the research sample was relevant to the research objectives because it represented final year students who were preparing to enter the workforce.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	64	39%
Women	101	61%
Quantity	165	100%

The descriptive analysis of variables aims to describe the respondents' perception of each research variable based on the average value of questionnaire answers. The interval scale is used to classify results into very low to very high categories. The internship experience variable was measured using eight statement items and resulted in an average score of 3.573 which was classified as high. These findings show that in general, students consider internship experience to provide significant benefits in improving their understanding of the world of work, practical skills, and professional readiness. All indicators of internship experience were in the high category, with the highest scores on the ability to apply knowledge, increase in confidence, and increase in work enthusiasm. Meanwhile, the lowest scores were related to the perception of motivational support from the staff of the internship, although it remained in the high category. These results indicate that internship experience plays a positive role as a means of direct learning in the work environment.

Table 2 Characteristics by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18	2	1%
19	2	1%
20	18	11%

21	58	35%
22	69	42%
23	14	8%
24	2	1%

The psychological capital variable is measured through eight items that reflect aspects of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. The results of the analysis showed an average score of 3.466 which was in the high category. This indicates that students have good psychological capital in facing the challenges and uncertainties of the world of work. All indicators of psychological capital are in the high category, which indicates the consistency of respondents' positive perceptions of self-ability, future hopes, and mental resilience. The item with the highest score is related to the ability to remain calm in difficult situations, while the lowest score is related to the attitude of generosity towards others, although it remains in the high category. These findings show that psychological capital is an important internal resource for students in preparing for the transition from the academic world to the professional world.

No	Indicator	Proportion of Respondent Answers	Score	Means	Criteria
1	X2.1.1	0	25	62	45
2	X2.1.2	0	23	63	60
3	X2.2.1	0	20	70	46
4	X2.2.2	0	25	56	67
5	X2.3.1	0	16	77	55
6	X2.3.2	0	23	70	49
7	X2.4.1	0	32	49	66
8	X2.4.2	0	26	54	60

Work motivation as a mediating variable was measured using ten statement items. The results of the analysis showed an average score of 3.805 which was classified as a high category. These findings reflect that respondents have a strong internal drive to excel, learn, and thrive in the workforce. All indicators of work motivation are in the high category, with the highest score on the sense of responsibility for work results and interest in learning new things. Meanwhile, the lowest score is related to the spirit of achieving the target, although it is still in the high category. These results show that students' work motivation is relatively stable and serves as the main driver in efforts to prepare themselves to enter the world of work. High work motivation also indicates the mental readiness of students in facing increasingly competitive professional demands.

No	Indicator	Proportion of Respondent Answers	Score	Means	Criteria
1	Z1.1.1	0	2	69	59
2	Z1.1.2	0	2	71	63
3	Z1.2.1	0	5	46	78
4	Z1.2.2	0	4	60	72
5	Z1.3.1	0	2	61	74
6	Z1.3.2	0	2	60	76
7	Z1.4.1	0	5	43	97
8	Z1.4.2	0	4	42	91
9	Z1.5.1	0	5	45	80

The variables of student work readiness are measured through ten statement items that include aspects of knowledge, skills, and work attitudes. The results of the descriptive analysis showed an average score of 3.826 which was in the high category. This indicates that students generally feel ready to enter the world of work after going through the learning process and internship experience. All indicators of job readiness are in the high category, with the highest score on the ability to accept criticism and suggestions as material for self-development. Meanwhile, the lowest score relates to openness to additional training, although it remains in the high category. These findings show that students' work readiness has been formed quite maturely, both in terms of technical competence and professional attitude, so as to support readiness for transition to the world of work.

No	Indicator	Proportion of Respondent Answers	Score	Means	Criteria
1	Y1.1.1	0	2	57	65
2	Y1.1.2	0	9	57	55
3	Y1.2.1	0	9	45	67
4	Y1.2.2	0	12	46	71
5	Y1.3.1	0	6	67	55
6	Y1.3.2	0	8	51	75
7	Y1.4.1	0	9	50	71
8	Y1.4.2	0	9	48	68
9	Y1.5.1	0	6	53	61
10	Y1.5.2	0	7	28	74
Variable Average Y		3,826	Height		

No	Indicator	Proportion of Respondent Answers	Score	Means	Criteria
1	Y1.1.1	0	2	57	65
2	Y1.1.2	0	9	57	55
3	Y1.2.1	0	9	45	67
4	Y1.2.2	0	12	46	71
5	Y1.3.1	0	6	67	55
6	Y1.3.2	0	8	51	75
7	Y1.4.1	0	9	50	71
8	Y1.4.2	0	9	48	68
9	Y1.5.1	0	6	53	61

Structural model analysis was carried out using the SEM-PLS approach through two main stages, namely outer model testing and inner model. The results of the outer model test showed that all indicators had an outer loading value above 0.70 and an AVE value above 0.50, thus meeting the convergent validity criteria. In addition, discriminant validity testing shows that each indicator has the highest correlation on the construct it measures, which signifies no overlap between variables. The reliability test also showed that Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values of all variables were above 0.90, reflecting the excellent internal consistency of the instrument. Thus, all constructs in this study are declared valid and reliable, so they are suitable for use in testing the structural relationships between variables.

Internal testing of the model is carried out to assess the predictive strength and suitability of the model. The R-Square value shows that job readiness can be explained by 53.6% by independent variables, while work motivation is explained by 39.6%, both of which fall into the moderate category. The Q-Square test shows values above zero

for the variables of job readiness and work motivation, which indicates the model's good predictive ability. In addition, the fit model test showed an SRMR value below 0.10 and an NFI value above 0.7, so the model was declared to be in accordance with empirical data. Overall, these results show that the developed structural model is of adequate quality and can be used for hypothesis testing.

The results of the pathway coefficient test showed that internship experience and psychological capital had a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness. Psychological capital also has the strongest influence on work motivation, while work motivation has a positive effect on job readiness. These findings support Social Cognitive Career Theory which emphasizes the role of learning experiences and personal factors in shaping career readiness. However, work motivation has not been shown to mediate the relationship between internship experience and job readiness, suggesting that internship experience has more direct effect. In contrast, work motivation has been shown to mediate the relationship between psychological capital and job readiness, confirming that psychological capital increases job readiness both directly and through motivational motivation.

Overall, this study shows that internship experience and psychological capital are key factors in increasing students' job readiness, with work motivation playing an important role as an important mechanism, especially in the psychological capital pathway. These findings provide practical implications for universities and stakeholders to improve the quality of internship programs and develop students' psychological capital through mental coaching and confidence building. In addition, the results of this study enrich SCCT-based empirical studies in the context of student job readiness. With a valid and reliable model, this research can be used as the basis for the development of higher education policies that are oriented towards the job readiness of graduates in the era of global competition.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the research results and discussion of the influence of internship experience and psychological capital on the work readiness of students in Gresik Regency with work motivation as a mediation variable, several conclusions were obtained. The more quality of the internship experience students get, the more mature their readiness to face the world of work will be through direct experience in the professional environment, practical skills development, and the formation of industrial work attitudes. Students with high self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience show strong confidence, better adaptability, and superior mental toughness in anticipating career challenges. Real exposure to the world of work through internships can trigger students' interest, enthusiasm, and internal drive to actively prepare for future career transitions. Positive psychological capital strengthens students' intrinsic motivation through confidence in self-competence, an optimistic vision of career goals, and resilience in the face of professional obstacles. A high level of work motivation results in superior mental readiness, a mature professional attitude, and a strong commitment to the expectations of the work environment. Internship experience increases job readiness not only directly but also through indirect pathways through increased work motivation as a liaison mechanism. Psychological capital enriches job readiness through direct effects as well as indirect effects through work motivation as a reinforcement of the psychological process of career transition. Overall, this study proves that student job readiness is a function of the interaction of external factors (internship experience) and internal factors (psychological capital) with work motivation playing a crucial role as a bridge connecting the two lines of influence.

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