THE EFFECTS OF SOFT SKILLS, PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES, AND WORK READINESS ON THE EMPLOYABILITY OF FRESH GRADUATES AT THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM

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Abstract

Employability has become a critical issue for fresh graduates, particularly in facing increasingly competitive labor market demands. This study aims to examine the effect of soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness on the employability of fresh graduates from the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram. Employability is conceptualized as the ability of graduates to obtain, maintain, and adapt to employment opportunities in a dynamic work environment. This research adopts a quantitative approach using a survey method. The population consists of fresh graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram, with samples selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS software. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, to ensure the validity of the regression model. The results indicate that soft skills have a positive and significant effect on employability, highlighting the importance of communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities in enhancing graduates' competitiveness. Personal attributes, including self-confidence, responsibility, and emotional control, are also found to have a significant positive effect on employability. Furthermore, job readiness significantly influences employability, suggesting that graduates who are better prepared mentally, cognitively, and behaviorally are more capable of meeting workplace expectations. Simultaneously, soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness significantly affect employability. These findings emphasize the need for higher education institutions to strengthen the development of soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness to improve graduate employability and facilitate a smoother transition into the workplace.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Personal Attributes, Job Readiness, Employability, Fresh Graduates

The Effects of Soft Skills, Personal Attributes, and Work Readiness…

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, employability has emerged as a central concern in higher education, particularly in relation to the transition of fresh graduates into the labor market. Rapid technological advancement, organizational restructuring, and increasing global competition have significantly altered employer expectations. Graduates are no longer assessed solely on academic achievement or technical competence, but also on their ability to adapt, communicate effectively, and demonstrate appropriate personal characteristics in the workplace. Consequently, employability is increasingly understood as a multidimensional construct that encompasses skills, attributes, and readiness to perform effectively in a professional environment.

Employability refers to an individual's capability to obtain employment, maintain work performance, and adapt to changing job requirements throughout their career. Previous studies emphasize that employability is shaped not only by hard skills, but also by soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness developed during the educational process. Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, are widely recognized as essential competencies that enable graduates to function effectively in organizational settings. Employers consistently report that deficiencies in soft skills are a major barrier to graduate employment, even among individuals with strong academic backgrounds.

In addition to soft skills, personal attributes play a critical role in determining employability outcomes. Personal attributes include internal characteristics such as self-confidence, responsibility, emotional control, discipline, and work ethics. These attributes influence how individuals respond to workplace demands, manage interpersonal relationships, and cope with pressure. Graduates who demonstrate positive personal attributes tend to exhibit higher levels of professionalism and resilience, making them more attractive to employers. Prior research suggests that personal attributes significantly contribute to employability by shaping work behavior and long-term career adaptability.

Job readiness is another important factor that bridges the gap between education and employment. Job readiness reflects the extent to which graduates are mentally, cognitively, and behaviorally prepared to enter the workforce. This includes understanding workplace

norms, possessing relevant competencies, and demonstrating readiness to perform job tasks effectively. Graduates with high levels of job readiness are more capable of meeting employer expectations and adjusting to organizational cultures. Studies have shown that job readiness not only influences initial employment opportunities but also affects long-term career sustainability.

Despite the growing body of literature on employability, empirical studies that simultaneously examine the influence of soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness on employability remain limited, particularly in the context of Indonesian higher education. Many previous studies focus on individual factors in isolation or emphasize employability outcomes without integrating readiness and personal characteristics as key explanatory variables. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to fresh graduates from public universities in regional contexts, such as the University of Mataram.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness on the employability of fresh graduates from the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram. By employing a quantitative approach and multiple linear regression analysis, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence on the relative contribution of each variable to employability. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the employability literature and practically to higher education institutions in designing strategies to enhance graduate employability and facilitate a smoother transition from education to the world of work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of individual attributes and employability-related skills in shaping work readiness and productive behavior. Research by Anissa Fitriyani et al. (2025) examined the effect of soft skills and self-efficacy on fresh graduates' job readiness, with work motivation acting as a mediating variable. The study demonstrated that soft skills and self-efficacy, which are categorized as personal attributes, have a substantial direct effect on job readiness. These findings highlight the crucial role of

behavioral and psychological factors in preparing individuals for effective performance in the workplace.

Similarly, Astuti et al. (2025) investigated the role of social support in graduates' readiness for the workplace in Indonesia, with particular attention to the mediating role of soft skills. The results revealed that soft skills significantly mediate the relationship between social support and work readiness, indicating that soft skills function as an essential pathway toward readiness for work. This study reinforces the view that personal competencies and behavioral skills are central to effective work behavior and readiness.

Ratuela et al. (2022) analyzed the influence of hard skills and self-efficacy on work readiness among final-year management students. Their findings showed that self-efficacy, as a dimension of personal attributes, has a positive and significant effect on work readiness. This suggests that individuals who possess confidence in their abilities tend to be better prepared to enter the workforce and demonstrate productive behavior.

Further evidence is provided by Mamentu et al. (2023), who examined the simultaneous effects of self-efficacy, soft skills, self-esteem, and work motivation on the work readiness of fresh graduates. The study found that soft skills and personal attribute factors, including self-efficacy and self-esteem, significantly influence work readiness. These results underline the importance of motivation and individual characteristics in supporting effective and productive work behavior.

International research by Succi and Canovi (2020) explored the role of soft skills in enhancing graduate employability by comparing students' and employers' perceptions. The findings revealed that soft skills are directly linked to graduate employability and are considered fundamental requirements for career development. This perspective is further supported by Subedi (2017), who argued that while hard skills may facilitate entry into the labor market, soft skills are essential for sustaining employability and long-term career growth.

In the Indonesian context, Arham and Nio (2025) examined the effect of employability skills on work readiness, with social support acting as a moderating variable. Their results confirmed that employability skills, which include soft skills and personal attributes, significantly influence students' work readiness. Similar conclusions were reached

by Putriatama et al. (2016), who found that employability skills mediate the relationship between practical work experience, labor market insight, and vocational competence on graduates' work readiness.

Overall, previous studies consistently demonstrate that soft skills, personal attributes, motivation, and employability skills play a significant role in shaping work readiness and effective work behavior. Although these studies focus primarily on students and fresh graduates, their findings provide a strong theoretical foundation for examining productive work behavior among employees. This study builds upon prior research by applying these concepts to an organizational context, specifically examining how leadership behavior and work motivation influence productive work behavior within a company setting.

Although prior studies have extensively examined employability from various perspectives, several research gaps remain. Existing literature predominantly focuses on employability among students or graduates by emphasizing individual factors such as soft skills, self-efficacy, or personal attributes in isolation, without integrating job readiness as a comprehensive readiness construct. Other studies tend to position employability as an outcome of educational experiences or labor market conditions, while overlooking the combined role of internal competencies and psychological preparedness in shaping graduate employability. Furthermore, empirical evidence that simultaneously analyzes the effects of soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness on employability within a single regression model is still limited, particularly in the context of Indonesian public universities. Most previous research also concentrates on major metropolitan institutions, resulting in a lack of empirical insight from regional universities with different labor market dynamics. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by empirically investigating the simultaneous effects of soft skills, personal attributes, and job readiness on the employability of fresh graduates from the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram. By integrating these variables within a quantitative framework, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of employability and offers context-specific evidence to support higher education strategies aimed at improving graduate workforce readiness.

The Effects of Soft Skills, Personal Attributes, and Work Readiness…

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design with an associative approach to examine the relationships between soft skills, personal attributes, work readiness, and employability. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the data collected were numerical and analyzed statistically to test the proposed hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2019).

Research Location and Participants

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram, Indonesia. The research subjects consisted of final-year students and fresh graduates from the Management Study Program during the 2024–2025 academic period. This population was selected purposively because final-year students are in the transition phase toward entering the labor market, while fresh graduates have begun experiencing job search processes and early workplace adaptation. The inclusion of both groups provides a comprehensive overview of employability-related factors.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised all final-year students and fresh graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Mataram. The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with a tolerance level of 10 percent. A purposive sampling technique was applied, with the following criteria: (1) students who had completed at least 90 percent of their academic credits, and (2) fresh graduates who had graduated within the past year. These criteria ensured that respondents possessed relevant exposure to career preparation and employability-related experiences.

Data Type and Data Collection

This study utilized quantitative data collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online using Google Forms. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Primary data were obtained directly from respondents, while secondary data were collected from relevant literature, academic journals, and supporting documents (Sugiyono, 2016).

Variables and Measurement

The independent variables in this study were soft skills (X_1), personal attributes (X_2), and work readiness (X_3), while employability (Y) served as the dependent variable. Soft skills were measured using indicators of adaptability, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, adapted from Chala and Bouranta (2021). Personal attributes were measured based on indicators proposed by Potgieter and Coetzee (2013), including career self-management, cultural competence, self-efficacy, career resilience, sociability, entrepreneurial orientation, proactivity, and emotional literacy. Work readiness was measured using indicators adapted from ACT Work Readiness Standards (2013), which include fundamental skills, workforce skills, cross-functional skills, and occupational-specific skills. Employability was measured using indicators developed by Chih-Yang C. (2018), covering career development competence, interpersonal communication, problem-solving ability, self-management, adaptability, and teamwork.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis with the support of SPSS software. Prior to hypothesis testing, instrument validity and reliability tests were performed. Validity was assessed using Pearson's product–moment correlation, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold value of 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability (Ghozali, 2016).

Classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the suitability of the regression model, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Normality was assessed based on the significance value of the residual distribution, multicollinearity was evaluated using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values, and heteroscedasticity was examined through scatter plot analysis (Ghozali, 2016).

The multiple linear regression model applied in this study is expressed as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

where Y represents employability, X_1 denotes soft skills, X_2 represents personal attributes, X_3 refers to work readiness, α is the constant, β represents regression coefficients, and ε is the error term.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the F-test to examine the simultaneous effects of the independent variables and the t-test to assess their partial effects. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the explanatory power of the regression model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prior to hypothesis testing, a series of classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the robustness of the regression model. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test shows that the residuals are normally distributed, with an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.161, exceeding the 0.05 threshold. This result confirms that the normality assumption is satisfied. Multicollinearity diagnostics further indicate that all independent variables exhibit tolerance values greater than 0.10 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 10, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity among the predictors.

Heteroskedasticity was assessed using a scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values. As illustrated in Figure 1, the residuals are randomly dispersed around the zero line without forming a systematic pattern, indicating that the regression model does not suffer from heteroskedasticity and fulfills the homoscedasticity assumption.
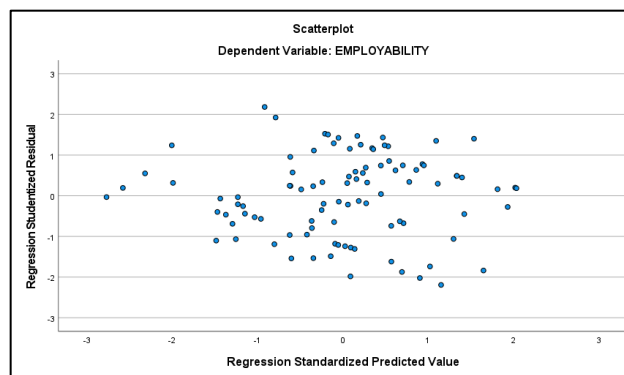

Figure 1.
Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals for Heteroskedasticity Test

The Effects of Soft Skills, Personal Attributes, and Work Readiness…

Subsequently, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of soft skills, personal attributes, and work readiness on employability. The structural relationship among variables is visualized in Figure 2, which presents the regression model along with standardized path coefficients. The model demonstrates that all three independent variables have positive relationships with employability.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.259	8.834		.595	.553
	SOFT SKILL	.480	.137	.304	3.505	<.001
	PERSONAL ATTRIBUTE	.223	.069	.283	3.236	.002
	KESIAPAN KERJA	.491	.145	.293	3.380	.001

a. Dependent Variable: EMPLOYABILITY

Figure 2.
Multiple Linear Regression Model of Employability

The regression results are summarized in Figure 2. Soft skills exhibit a positive and significant effect on employability ($\beta = 0.304$, $t = 3.505$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of non-technical competencies such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving enhance graduates' employability. Personal attributes also show a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 3.236$, $p = 0.002$), highlighting the importance of individual characteristics such as self-efficacy, proactivity, and career resilience. Similarly, work readiness significantly affects employability ($\beta = 0.293$, $t = 3.380$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that graduates who are better prepared for workplace demands are more competitive in the labor market.

The explanatory power of the regression model was assessed using the coefficient of determination. As presented in Table 3, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.296 indicates that 29.6% of the variance in employability is explained by the three independent variables, while the remaining 70.4% is influenced by other factors not included in this study.

Table 1.
Coefficient of Determination

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2
0.564	0.318	0.296

The Effects of Soft Skills, Personal Attributes, and Work Readiness…

The overall model is statistically significant, as evidenced by the F-test result (F = 14.452, p < 0.001). The coefficient of determination indicates that the model explains 31.8% of the variance in employability (R^2 = 0.318), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.296, suggesting a moderate explanatory power.

Discussion

This study examines the effects of soft skills, personal attributes, and work readiness on employability among final-year students and fresh graduates. The empirical findings demonstrate that all three independent variables exert a positive and statistically significant influence on employability, both individually and simultaneously. These results provide important insights into the key factors that enhance graduates' ability to enter and sustain employment in a competitive labor market.

The positive effect of soft skills on employability highlights the critical role of non-technical competencies in shaping graduates' career prospects. Soft skills such as communication, adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving enable individuals to function effectively within organizational settings and respond to dynamic workplace demands. The findings are consistent with prior studies that emphasize soft skills as a primary determinant of employability, often surpassing technical skills in employer preferences. Succi and Canovi (2020) argue that employers increasingly value graduates who demonstrate strong interpersonal and adaptive capabilities, as these skills support collaboration, organizational fit, and long-term performance. Similarly, Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) conceptualize employability as a psychosocial construct in which adaptability and interpersonal competence are central components. The present study reinforces this perspective by empirically confirming that stronger soft skills significantly enhance employability outcomes. Riyansyah & Suryatni (2025) found that emotional competence (as part of soft skills) acts as a strategic mediator between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, ultimately enhancing employability. This highlights the importance of soft skills development in improving work readiness and employability, especially in a competitive job market.

Personal attributes were also found to have a significant positive effect on employability. Attributes such as self-confidence, motivation, emotional regulation, and

initiative contribute to an individual's ability to manage career-related challenges and pursue employment opportunities proactively. This finding aligns with McQuaid and Lindsay's (2005) employability framework, which identifies personal attributes as a core element influencing an individual's capacity to obtain and maintain employment. Furthermore, Potgieter and Coetzee (2013) suggest that personal attributes shape individuals' career self-management and resilience, enabling them to cope with uncertainty and labor market volatility. The results of this study support these arguments by demonstrating that graduates with stronger personal attributes are better equipped to position themselves as employable candidates.

Work readiness emerged as a significant predictor of employability, underscoring the importance of practical preparedness for the workplace. Work readiness reflects a combination of technical competence, communication skills, time management, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. The findings corroborate previous research indicating that graduates who possess higher levels of work readiness are more capable of adapting to organizational expectations and performing effectively from the early stages of employment (Dewantari & Soetjiningsih, 2022; Widiastuti et al., 2023). According to Hillage and Pollard (1998), employability is closely linked to an individual's readiness to perform work roles, as readiness influences both job entry and job sustainability. The present study provides empirical support for this theoretical view by confirming the positive role of work readiness in enhancing employability.

The simultaneous significance of soft skills, personal attributes, and work readiness suggests that employability is a multidimensional construct influenced by a combination of behavioral, psychological, and competence-based factors. The adjusted R^2 value indicates that while these variables explain a meaningful proportion of employability, other factors—such as labor market conditions, institutional reputation, and external support systems—may also play a role. This finding reinforces the notion that employability development requires an integrated approach that goes beyond technical training alone.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of higher education institutions in fostering not only academic knowledge but also soft skills, personal development, and work

The Effects of Soft Skills, Personal Attributes, and Work Readiness…

readiness. By integrating experiential learning, career development programs, and skill-based training into the curriculum, universities can better prepare graduates to meet labor market expectations and enhance their employability.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that soft skills, personal attributes, and work readiness significantly influence employability among final-year students and fresh graduates. Each variable demonstrates a positive contribution, indicating that employability is not solely determined by technical competence but is shaped by a combination of behavioral skills, psychological characteristics, and practical preparedness for the workplace.

The findings underscore the importance of soft skills as a critical employability driver, reflecting employers' increasing emphasis on communication, adaptability, and teamwork. Personal attributes, such as self-confidence and motivation, further strengthen graduates' capacity to navigate career transitions and labor market uncertainty. Additionally, work readiness plays a vital role by enabling graduates to translate knowledge and skills into effective job performance.

These results suggest that higher education institutions should adopt a holistic approach to graduate development by integrating soft skills training, personal development initiatives, and experiential learning into academic curricula. Such efforts are essential to enhancing graduates' employability and supporting their successful transition into the workforce.

Future research is encouraged to incorporate additional variables and broader samples to capture other factors influencing employability and to improve the explanatory power of the model.

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