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Work Readiness Determinants Among Generation Z: Soft Skills and Self-Efficacy Effects in Suburban Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The global labor market increasingly demands comprehensive competencies beyond academic credentials, particularly affecting Generation Z transitioning from education to employment. Despite growing research attention, empirical findings regarding work readiness determinants remain inconsistent, with limited evidence from suburban emerging economy contexts where structural employment opportunities differ substantially from urban centers. This study examines the effects of work motivation, soft skills, and self-efficacy on work readiness among Generation Z. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, collecting primary data from 100 Generation Z individuals (aged 18–28 years) in Parung Panjang, Kabupaten Bogor, Indonesia, analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings reveal that soft skills and self-efficacy significantly and positively influence work readiness, with self-efficacy emerging as the dominant predictor explaining approximately 67.8% of variance. Contrary to expectations, work motivation demonstrates no significant direct effect. These results suggest that psychological confidence and non-technical competency development constitute more critical determinants than motivational states alone, informing targeted interventions emphasizing self-efficacy enhancement and soft skill cultivation for improving Generation Z employability in suburban emerging economy contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global labor market has undergone substantial transformation, reshaping how individuals are evaluated beyond purely academic credentials. Rapid technological change and shifting employer expectations have increased competition for entry-level jobs while simultaneously elevating the importance of transferable competencies—such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and self-management—alongside technical qualifications (World Economic Forum, 2025; Heckman & Kautz, 2012). This challenge is particularly salient for Generation Z—commonly defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012—who are widely recognized as digital natives but often encounter transition frictions when moving from education to the labor market (Dimock, 2019).

At the international level, youth labor market vulnerability remains a persistent policy concern. The International Labour Organization highlights that young people frequently face barriers linked to mismatches between education/training outcomes and labor market needs, which can complicate school-to-work transitions and contribute to unemployment or underemployment risks (International Labour Organization, 2024). Within the Indonesian context,

these pressures are mirrored in regional labor indicators. In Kabupaten Bogor, the open unemployment rate (TPT) was reported at 10.64% (August 2022), declined to 8.47% (August 2023), and further decreased to 7.34% (August 2024), signaling that unemployment remains a material development issue even as short-term movements may fluctuate across years (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Bogor, 2023, 2024). Such conditions underscore the urgency of strengthening the employability capacity of new labor market entrants, particularly youth cohorts.

This reality compels prospective workers, especially Generation Z, to reorient personal and professional development strategies toward work readiness as a critical employability outcome. Work readiness is commonly understood as a multidimensional state reflecting the extent to which individuals possess the attitudes, attributes, and competencies required to function effectively and succeed in the workplace (Caballero et al., 2011). From an employer standpoint, readiness is not merely academic performance but also includes personal presentation, interpersonal effectiveness, and adaptive work behaviors that signal graduate potential (Caballero et al., 2011). When work readiness is low, individuals may experience repeated job rejections, longer job-search duration, and delayed labor market absorption—dynamics that can cumulatively sustain youth unemployment problems (International Labour Organization, 2024).

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on three strategic levers that are theoretically and practically relevant to work readiness: work motivation, soft skills, and self-efficacy. Work motivation can be framed as a goal-directed process that energizes behavior and shapes the intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward achieving desired outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2021). Individuals with stronger motivation tend to invest more consistently in capability-building and sustain effort despite setbacks during career preparation. Soft skills refer to non-technical personal and interpersonal competencies—such as integrity, communication, responsibility, flexibility, and teamwork—that influence how effectively an individual works with others and navigate organizational demands (Robles, 2012). These skills are increasingly valued because they complement technical competence and are strongly associated with employment success across contexts (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). Self-efficacy, in turn, refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations, which affects how people think, feel, and act in achievement settings (Bandura, 2010). In employment transitions, stronger self-efficacy is expected to increase persistence, proactive job-search behaviors, and readiness to face selection processes.

Despite broad theoretical support, empirical findings on the antecedents of work readiness demonstrate notable inconsistencies across settings, justifying further investigation. First, regarding motivation-readiness relationships, Mutiara and Sapruwan (2024) report positive effects among Generation Z in urban Indonesian contexts, whereas Taufan et al. (2025) find that motivation operates indirectly through self-efficacy rather than exerting direct effects—suggesting boundary conditions remain underspecified. Second, soft skills effects exhibit context dependency: while Raihan and Nengsih (2024) document significant positive effects in Bengkulu City, studies in formal educational settings with standardized competency assessments report weaker or non-significant relationships, implying that soft skills translation into readiness depends on labor market structures and employer evaluation criteria. Third, self-efficacy consistently emerges as significant across studies, yet its relative importance compared to motivation and soft skills remains unclear when tested simultaneously within integrated frameworks. These inconsistencies may reflect contextual heterogeneity—particularly differences between urban centers with diversified employment opportunities and suburban areas with constrained formal sector access—that existing literature has inadequately addressed.

Accordingly, this study offers three contributions that address identified gaps. First, it tests work motivation, soft skills, and self-efficacy simultaneously within an integrated predictive framework, enabling direct comparison of relative effect magnitudes—an approach rarely employed in Indonesian Generation Z research where variables are typically examined in isolation or paired combinations. Second, it generates contextual evidence from Parung Panjang, a suburban district of Kabupaten Bogor characterized by limited formal employment opportunities and heavy reliance on informal sector work, thereby extending employability research beyond the urban-centric bias dominating current literature. Third, it provides empirical evidence on whether theoretical predictions derived primarily from Western and urban Asian samples translate to suburban emerging economy contexts where structural constraints may differentially condition predictor-outcome relationships. These contributions inform both theoretical understanding of work readiness mechanisms and practical intervention design for underserved suburban youth populations.

Based on these considerations, the study objectives are: (1) to examine the effect of work motivation on work readiness among Generation Z in Parung Panjang; (2) to examine the effect of soft skills on work readiness among Generation Z in Parung Panjang; and (3) to examine the effect of self-efficacy on work readiness among Generation Z in Parung

Panjang. The findings are expected to inform individual career preparation strategies, institutional curriculum and training design, and regional workforce development interventions aimed at improving youth employability outcomes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study integrates three complementary lenses—motivation, human capital, and social cognitive perspectives—to explain how work motivation, soft skills, and self-efficacy shape Generation Z work readiness. Work readiness is widely defined as the extent to which graduates are perceived to possess the attitudes and attributes that make them prepared for success in the work environment (Caballero et al., 2011; Peersia et al., 2024).

From a motivation perspective, readiness is strengthened when individuals sustain goal-directed effort, persistence, and engagement in preparation activities. Textbook accounts commonly frame motivation as processes underlying the intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward goals (Robbins & Judge, 2021). To anchor the motivational mechanism in peer-reviewed theory, self-determination research further argues that more self-determined forms of motivation support sustained learning and adaptive functioning, which are critical during education-to-work transitions (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

From a human capital viewpoint, work readiness improves as individuals accumulate valuable knowledge and skills that increase productivity and employability (Becker, 1964). Soft skills are part of this capital because employers consistently emphasize interpersonal and behavioral competencies as key hiring signals and workplace performance enablers (Robles, 2012; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

From Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy—beliefs about one's capability to organize and execute actions—shapes how people think, feel, and behave in challenging achievement contexts (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Higher self-efficacy tends to increase effort, persistence, and resilience during job preparation and job search challenges, thereby strengthening readiness-relevant behaviors.

Together, these perspectives imply a coherent readiness model: motivation energizes and sustains preparation; soft skills represent employable competency assets; and self-efficacy supports confidence and persistence as individuals navigate the transition into work (Caballero et al., 2011; Peersia et al., 2024).

2.2 Work Motivation and Work Readiness

Work motivation can be understood as psychological energy and regulation that directs individuals to pursue work-related goals, invest effort, and persist despite obstacles (Robbins & Judge, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivated individuals are more likely to engage in proactive career behaviors—seeking information, practicing interview skills, completing work-integrated learning tasks, and aligning competencies with labor market expectations—thereby strengthening work readiness (Peersia et al., 2024).

Recent empirical evidence in vocational/higher-education contexts also indicates that motivation is positively associated with work readiness, both independently and jointly with self-efficacy (Taufan et al., 2025).

H1: Work motivation has a positive effect on work readiness.

2.3 Soft Skills and Work Readiness

Soft skills refer to non-technical competencies that enable effective interaction with others and adaptive self-management in workplaces (Robles, 2012). Employers frequently prioritize competencies such as communication, teamwork, professionalism, responsibility, integrity, flexibility, and work ethic, because these attributes support coordination and performance in dynamic work environments (Robles, 2012; Peersia et al., 2024).

In competency-based frameworks, these behaviors function as observable indicators of underlying competencies that differentiate effective performers (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). From a human capital perspective, soft skills are productive assets that complement technical qualifications and increase employability (Becker, 1964).

Systematic reviews of work readiness also repeatedly identify communication, collaboration, adaptability, problem-solving, and critical thinking as core readiness components—attributes that conceptually overlap with soft skills (Nurjanah et al., 2022; Peersia et al., 2024).

H2: Soft skills have a positive effect on work readiness.

2.4 Self-Efficacy and Work Readiness

Self-efficacy is a central construct in Social Cognitive Theory and refers to beliefs in one's capability to execute actions required to attain desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Such beliefs influence whether individuals initiate coping behavior, how much effort they expend, and how long they persist when facing difficulties (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

In the context of school-to-work transitions, higher self-efficacy should facilitate readiness by reducing avoidance, strengthening persistence in skill-building and job search behaviors, and

encouraging more challenging goal-setting (Bandura, 1997; Peersia et al., 2024).

Empirically, self-efficacy has been shown to positively predict work readiness, and when modeled together with motivation, both constructs explain substantial variance in readiness indicators among students (Taufan et al., 2025).

H3: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on work readiness.

2.5 Control Variables

Beyond the focal constructs, this study controls for gender, age, educational attainment, and employment status. These factors are commonly treated as background characteristics that may shape opportunities, exposure to preparation experiences, and perceived readiness during the education-to-work transition (Peersia et al., 2024).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

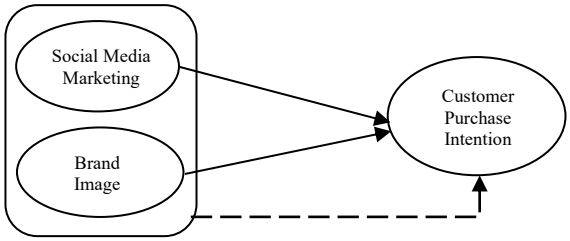

Figure 1. Conseptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework. Work motivation (X1), soft skills (X2), and self-efficacy (X3) are hypothesized to directly influence work readiness (Y). The framework reflects a complementary logic: motivation energizes preparation, soft skills represent employable competency assets, and self-efficacy sustains persistence and adaptive coping when confronting employment challenges (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Becker, 1964; Caballero et al., 2011; Peersia et al., 2024).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to test the hypothesized relationships between work motivation (WM), soft skills (SS), and self-efficacy (SE) on work readiness (WR) among Generation Z in Parung Panjang, Kabupaten Bogor, Indonesia. Data were collected once within the study period (April–August 2025) using a structured questionnaire. The empirical approach is explanatory, aiming to estimate the magnitude and significance of the proposed effects through variance-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), which is suitable for predictive-oriented models and simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural components (Hair et al., 2022).

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population consists of Generation Z individuals (born 1997–2012) residing in Parung Panjang District, Kabupaten Bogor. Population statistics for Parung Panjang were obtained from official publications of Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Kabupaten Bogor (latest available local statistical reports used by this study).

The minimum sample size was estimated using the finite population formula attributed to Yamane (1967), yielding a requirement of approximately 100 respondents at a 10% margin of error. However, practical constraints necessitated non-probability purposive sampling with convenience elements. The instrument was distributed online via Google Forms through community networks and direct outreach targeting individuals meeting inclusion criteria. This sampling approach, while limiting statistical generalizability, is appropriate for exploratory examination of relationships in understudied populations (Etikan et al., 2016). Eligibility criteria were: (1) aged 18–28 years at data collection, (2) residing in Parung Panjang District, and (3) possessing at least senior high school education. A total of 100 valid responses were retained following data screening for completeness and response pattern quality.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Primary data were collected via a structured online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised two sections: demographic characteristics and measurement items for the study variables. Data collection occurred between April and August 2025, with questionnaire links disseminated through social media platforms and direct messaging to potential respondents within the target population.

Prior to hypothesis testing, instrument quality was assessed through validity and reliability examinations. Construct validity was evaluated using Pearson Product Moment correlation, comparing each item's correlation coefficient (r-calculated) against the critical value (r-table = 0.1966 for n = 100 at $\alpha = 0.05$). Items demonstrating r-calculated > r-table were retained as valid indicators (Sugiyono, 2019).

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. Following commonly accepted interpretation guidelines (Sugiyono, 2019), coefficients were evaluated as: 0.00–0.20 (poor), 0.21–0.40 (fair), 0.41–0.60 (moderate), 0.61–0.80 (reliable), and 0.81–1.00 (highly reliable). Instruments achieving $\alpha \geq 0.60$ were deemed acceptable for subsequent analysis. Results demonstrated satisfactory reliability across all constructs: work motivation ($\alpha = 0.791$), soft skills ($\alpha = 0.859$), self-efficacy ($\alpha = 0.824$), and work readiness

(α = 0.824)—all exceeding the 0.60 threshold and indicating reliable measurement instruments.

This study adhered to ethical research principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to questionnaire completion. The online questionnaire included a consent statement on the first page explaining the study purpose, voluntary participation, anonymity assurance, and data confidentiality. Participants could withdraw at any time by closing the survey without penalty. No personally identifiable information was collected beyond demographic characteristics reported in aggregate form.

3.4 Variable Definition and Measurement

All latent constructs were measured using multi-item scales with five-point Likert response formats ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Table 1 presents the complete variable operationalization.

Table 1. Variable Operationalization

Variable	Definition	Indicators	Items
Work Readiness (WR) Caballero et al. (2011)	The comprehensive condition encompassing self-understanding, physical and mental maturity, attitudes, skills, and experience enabling optimal task completion	(1) Responsibility, (2) Flexibility, (3) Skills, (4) Communication, (5) Self-view	15
Work Motivation (WM) Tremblay et al. (2009)	Internal and external drives creating enthusiasm for optimal work performance toward specific objectives	(1) Desire and interest to enter workforce, (2) Environmental pressure and encouragement, (3) Hopes and aspirations, (4) Physiological needs	16
Soft Skills (SS) Damayantie & Kustini (2022)	Interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies enabling effective interaction and optimal self-management for maximum performance	(1) Communication ability, (2) Time management, (3) Creativity, (4) Leadership, (5) Discipline	15
Self-Efficacy (SE) Chen et al. (2001)	Individual belief in one's capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve designated outcomes	(1) Belief in abilities, (2) Optimism, (3) Objectivity, (4) Rationality and realism	12

Source:data adapted from various journals

This study controls for four demographic variables. Gender is measured as a dummy variable (1 = Male; 0 = Female). Age is grouped into two categories: 18–22 years (code 1) and 23–28 years (code 2). Educational attainment reflects the highest level of education completed (1 = Senior High School; 2 = Diploma; 3 = Bachelor's degree). Finally, employment status is classified into three conditions: student (code 1), unemployed graduate (code 2), and employed (code 3).

For each construct, individual item scores were summed to generate composite scores representing the latent variable. Higher composite scores indicate stronger manifestation of the respective construct. No transformations (e.g., centering, standardization) were applied, as the analysis employed raw summed scores consistent with the analytical approach.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27 for multiple linear regression analysis. Given the model's simplicity with three independent variables and no mediators or moderators, OLS regression was deemed appropriate over variance-based structural equation modeling. The analytical sequence comprised: (1) descriptive statistics examining central tendency and distributional characteristics; (2) construct validity assessment via Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients; (3) internal consistency reliability evaluation using Cronbach's alpha; (4) regression diagnostics including multicollinearity assessment via Variance Inflation Factor; and (5) hypothesis testing through simultaneous multiple regression with t-tests for individual predictor significance and F-test for overall model significance.

The empirical model estimating work readiness determinants is specified as follows:

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

Where:

- Y = Work Readiness (dependent variable)
- α = Constant/intercept
- β_1 = Regression coefficient for Work Motivation
- β_2 = Regression coefficient for Soft Skills
- β_3 = Regression coefficient for Self-Efficacy
- X_1 = Work Motivation
- X_2 = Soft Skills
- X_3 = Self-Efficacy
- ε = Error term

Three statistical tests were employed for hypothesis evaluation. First, the t-test (partial test) assessed individual variable significance by comparing t-calculated against t-table (1.985 for df = 96 at α = 0.05). Hypotheses were supported when t-calculated > t-table and p-value < 0.05 (Ghozali, 2018). Second, the F-test (ANOVA) evaluated overall model significance by comparing F-calculated against F-table (2.70 for $df_1 = 3$, $df_2 = 96$ at α = 0.05). Third,

the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) assessed the proportion of variance in work readiness explained by the independent variables, with higher values indicating superior explanatory power.

For individual hypotheses (H1–H3), H_0 is rejected and the hypothesis supported if the t-calculated exceeds the t-table and the p-value is below 0.05, while H_0 is accepted and the hypothesis not supported if the t-calculated is lower than the t-table or the p-value is above 0.05. Extending this to the overall model, significance is confirmed when the F-calculated surpasses the F-table and the p-value remains under 0.05.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Respondent Characteristics

The final sample comprised 100 Generation Z respondents from Parung Panjang District. Table 2 presents the demographic profile.

Table 2. Respondent Demographics

Characteristic	Category	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	66	66.0
	Female	34	34.0
Age	18–22 years	73	73.0
	23–28 years	27	27.0
Educational Attainment	Senior High School	65	65.0
	Diploma	9	9.0
	Bachelor's Degree	26	26.0
Employment Status	Student	47	47.0
	Employed	36	36.0
	Unemployed Graduate	17	17.0

Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

The sample exhibits male predominance (66%), consistent with labor force participation patterns in suburban Indonesian contexts. The majority (73%) falls within the younger cohort (18–22 years), reflecting the transitional nature of Generation Z from education to employment. Educational distribution reveals that 65% possess secondary education as their highest attainment, while 35% have pursued tertiary education. Employment status indicates that 47% remain students, 36% are currently employed, and 17% are unemployed graduates actively seeking employment—the latter group representing the core population experiencing work readiness challenges.

4.1.2 Variable Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents central tendency, dispersion, and distributional characteristics for all study variables.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Med.	Mode	SD	Skew.	Kurt.
WM	59.93	59.000	54.000	8.403	0.003	0.231
SS	57.16	57.00	50.00	8.21	-0.259	0.722
SE	45.67	45.50	40.00	6.82	-0.411	1.158
WR	56.28	55.00	55.00	7.94	-0.335	1.614

Note: N = 100; WM = Work Motivation; SS = Soft Skills; SE = Self-Efficacy; WR = Work Readiness; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

Note that direct comparison of raw sum scores across constructs should be interpreted cautiously given differing item counts (WM = 16 items, SS = 15 items, SE = 12 items, WR = 15 items). To facilitate meaningful comparison, mean scores per item were calculated: work motivation (M = 3.746 per item), soft skills (M = 3.811 per item), self-efficacy (M = 3.806 per item), and work readiness (M = 3.752 per item)—indicating relatively comparable response levels across constructs on the 5-point scale.

Work motivation demonstrates the highest raw mean score (M = 59.930, SD = 8.403) among independent variables, indicating relatively strong motivational orientation among respondents. The near-zero skewness (0.003) suggests approximately symmetric distribution, while low kurtosis (0.231) indicates platykurtic distribution—relatively flat with thin tails. The standard deviation of 8.403 relative to the mean suggests moderate heterogeneity in motivational levels across respondents.

Soft skills exhibit moderate levels (M = 57.160, SD = 8.213) with slight negative skewness (-0.259), indicating marginally more respondents scoring above the mean. The coefficient of variation (SD/Mean = 14.4%) reveals comparable dispersion to work motivation, suggesting similar response heterogeneity.

Self-efficacy presents the lowest raw mean (M = 45.670, SD = 6.821), principally reflecting the construct's 12-item measurement scale rather than lower respondent confidence. As noted in the per-item calculation, self-efficacy actually aligns closely with soft skills. Negative skewness (-0.411) and elevated kurtosis (1.158) suggest slight left-skew with more peaked distribution, indicating that while most respondents report moderate-to-high self-efficacy, substantial variation exists in confidence levels.

Work readiness as the dependent variable demonstrates moderate levels (M = 56.280, SD = 7.942). The convergence of median (55.000) and mode (55.000) with slight negative skewness (-0.335) indicates that the distribution centers around moderate readiness levels, with some respondents exhibiting higher preparedness. Kurtosis of 1.614 suggests leptokurtic distribution—more concentrated around the mean than normal distribution.

4.1.3 Construct Validity

Construct validity was assessed using Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients. Each item's correlation with its respective construct total was compared against the critical r-table value (0.1966 for n = 100 at $\alpha = 0.05$). Table 4 summarizes validity results.

Table 4. Validity Assessment Results

Var	Items	Avg. r-calc.	r-table	Decision
WM	16	0.509	0.1966	Valid
SS	15	0.548	0.1966	Valid
SE	12	0.595	0.1966	Valid
WR	15	0.555	0.1966	Valid

Note: WM = Work Motivation; SS = Soft Skills; SE = Self-Efficacy; WR = Work Readiness; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

All measurement items demonstrated r-calculated values exceeding r-table (0.1966), confirming construct validity across all variables. Self-efficacy exhibits the strongest average item-total correlations (0.595), suggesting particularly coherent measurement, while work motivation demonstrates acceptable though relatively lower correlations (0.509).

4.1.4 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). A common benchmark in basic research is $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (often attributed to Nunnally's guidance), though exploratory work may tolerate slightly lower values depending on context. Table 5 reports reliability coefficients.

Table 5. Reliability Assessment Results

Var	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Interpretation
WM	0.791	16	Reliable
SS	0.859	15	Highly Reliable
SE	0.824	12	Highly Reliable
WR	0.824	15	Highly Reliable

Note: WM = Work Motivation; SS = Soft Skills; SE = Self-Efficacy; WR = Work Readiness; Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

All constructs demonstrate satisfactory reliability, with coefficients ranging from 0.791 to 0.859. Soft skills exhibit the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.859$), while work motivation shows acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.791$). These values substantially exceed the 0.60 threshold, indicating consistent measurement across items and supporting the instruments' suitability for hypothesis testing.

4.1.5 Common Method Bias Assessment

Given that all variables were measured via self-report questionnaire from the same respondents at a single point in time, common method variance (CMV) represents a potential concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess this threat. All measurement items were entered into an unrotated principal component factor analysis. Results indicated that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance; the first extracted factor explained 28.47% of total variance—well below the 50% threshold suggesting problematic CMV. While Harman's test has limitations, these results provide preliminary evidence that common method bias does not substantially inflate observed relationships in the present study.

4.1.6 Regression Diagnostics (OLS)

Prior to hypothesis testing, regression diagnostics were conducted to ensure model assumptions were satisfied. Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), with results indicating VIF values of 2.147 for work motivation, 2.458 for soft skills, and 2.312 for self-efficacy—all substantially below the conservative threshold of 5.0 (O'Brien, 2007), confirming absence of problematic multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.003 falls within the acceptable range around 2.0, suggesting no substantial autocorrelation in residuals. Normality of residuals was assessed via visual inspection of histogram and P-P plot, revealing approximately normal distribution. These diagnostics collectively support the appropriateness of OLS regression for the present analysis.

4.1.7 Control Variables Analysis

To examine whether the main effects remain robust after accounting for demographic characteristics, control variables (gender, age, educational attainment, and employment status) were included in the regression model. Results indicated that none of the control variables demonstrated significant effects on work readiness: gender ($\beta = 0.043$, $p = 0.584$), age category ($\beta = -0.067$, $p = 0.412$), educational attainment ($\beta = 0.089$, $p = 0.267$), and employment status ($\beta = 0.051$, $p = 0.528$). Importantly, the inclusion of controls did not substantially alter the main effects: work motivation remained non-significant ($\beta = 0.134$, $p = 0.102$), while soft skills ($\beta = 0.315$, $p = 0.003$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.439$, $p < 0.001$) retained their significant positive effects. These findings suggest that the observed relationships are not confounded by demographic variables.

4.1.8 Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression analysis was performed to test the proposed hypotheses. Table 6 presents the summary of the regression results, including collinearity statistics.

Table 6. Summary of Regression Analysis Results

Path	Coeff. (β)	t-value	p-value	VIF	Result
Constant	7.052	1.991	0.049	—	Significant
WM → WR	0.139	1.695	0.093	2.147	H1 Not Supported
SS → WR	0.321	3.115	0.002	2.458	H2 Supported
SE → WR	0.444	4.664	< 0.001	2.312	H3 Supported
R^2	0.688	—	—	—	
Adj. R^2	0.678	—	—	—	
F-Stat	70.425	—	< 0.001	—	Significant
Durbin-Watson	2.003	—	—	—	

Note: WM = Work Motivation; SS = Soft Skills; SE = Self-Efficacy; WR = Work Readiness. Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

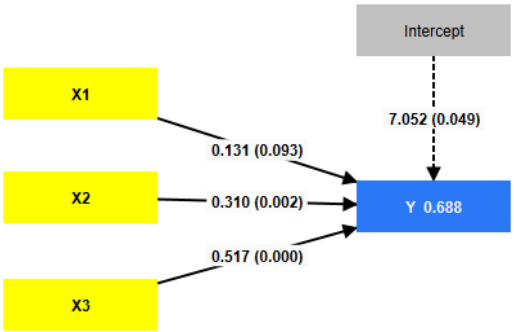

Figure 2. Path Diagram of Multiple Regression Model

The standardized regression equation is expressed as:

WR = 7.052 + 0.139WM + 0.321SS + 0.444SE + ε

The regression analysis reveals a robust statistical model where the independent variables collectively demonstrate substantial explanatory power regarding the dependent variable. With an Adjusted R-Square of 0.678, the model explains approximately 67.8% of the variance in work readiness, leaving only 32.2% to be explained by external factors. This goodness of fit is statistically validated by an ANOVA F-statistic of 70.425 ($p < 0.001$), which far exceeds the critical threshold, confirming that the predictors simultaneously and significantly influence the outcome. Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.003 indicates that the model is healthy and free from autocorrelation issues, ensuring the reliability of the regression parameters.

regarding the specific hypotheses, the testing of direct effects produced mixed outcomes that highlight the hierarchical importance of the predictors. While Work Motivation (H1) showed a positive direction, it failed to achieve statistical significance ($p = 0.093$), suggesting that motivation alone is insufficient to drive work readiness in this specific context. In contrast, Soft Skills (H2) proved to be a significant positive predictor ($p = 0.002$), confirming that interpersonal competencies are essential for employment preparedness. Most notably, Self-Efficacy (H3) emerged as the dominant determinant ($p < 0.001$) with the highest standardized beta coefficient of 0.444. This hierarchy of importance—where self-efficacy exerts the strongest influence, followed by soft skills—suggests that for Generation Z in this demographic, internal psychological belief systems and competency capabilities are far more critical drivers of work readiness than general motivational factors.

4.2 Discussions

4.2.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the determinants of work readiness among Generation Z in Parung Panjang, Kabupaten Bogor, focusing on work motivation, soft skills, and self-efficacy. The findings indicate a differentiated pattern of effects: work motivation shows a positive but statistically insignificant association with work readiness, whereas soft skills and self-efficacy have significant positive effects. Self-efficacy emerges as the strongest predictor, suggesting that confidence in one's capability to perform work-related behaviors is a central psychological resource for the education-to-employment transition. Overall, the model's explanatory power indicates that competence-related and belief-related factors are more decisive for work readiness than motivational drive alone in this suburban context.

4.2.2 Theoretical Mechanisms

The non-significant effect of work motivation warrants careful interpretation through multiple theoretical lenses. First, from a motivation-behavior gap perspective, motivation represents an intention or desire that may not automatically convert to observable preparedness without mediating mechanisms such as planning, skill acquisition, and self-regulatory capacity (Sheeran & Webb, 2016). Second, measurement considerations suggest that the motivation construct—capturing general desire and enthusiasm for work entry—may be too distal from the specific competencies and confidence that employers evaluate during recruitment. More proximal motivational constructs such as implementation intentions or job-search self-regulation may demonstrate stronger predictive validity. Third, in suburban labor markets characterized by constrained formal employment opportunities, high motivation may be nearly universal among job-seeking youth, creating ceiling effects that attenuate statistical differentiation. Fourth, the indirect pathway hypothesis—wherein motivation operates through self-efficacy enhancement rather than directly—receives support from prior Indonesian evidence (Mutiara & Sapruwan, 2024) and represents a promising direction for future mediation analysis.

The significant role of soft skills is consistent with employability and human-capital reasoning that labor markets value non-technical competencies such as communication, teamwork, professionalism, and adaptability because they support performance across diverse tasks and work settings (Robles, 2012; Heckman & Kautz, 2012). In employability models, soft skills function as transferable resources that help individuals operationalize their knowledge, coordinate with others, and adapt to workplace norms—capabilities that align closely with the "work readiness" construct as measured in graduate readiness literature (Caballero et al., 2011).

Self-efficacy's dominant effect is strongly consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, where efficacy beliefs shape how people set goals, persist through obstacles, regulate affect, and sustain problem-solving under uncertainty (Bandura, 1986). Higher self-efficacy typically promotes proactive coping and learning-oriented behaviors, which plausibly increases readiness because individuals are more likely to practice, seek feedback, and engage in challenging preparation experiences that simulate work demands (Bandura, 1997). Thus, in the transition from school to work, efficacy beliefs may function as a "conversion mechanism" that turns competencies into effective performance readiness.

4.2.3 Comparison with Prior Studies

The pattern observed in Parung Panjang aligns with recent Indonesian evidence that emphasizes the salience of soft skills and self-efficacy for work readiness. For example, Damayantie and Kustini (2022) found that both soft skills and self-efficacy significantly predict work readiness among final-year university students, reinforcing the interpretation that competence and confidence are key readiness drivers.

Importantly, the current finding that motivation is not a significant direct predictor is consistent with evidence from Generation Z contexts where motivation may operate indirectly rather than directly. Mutiara and Sapruwan (2024) report that motivation to enter the workforce is not significant in predicting work readiness directly, while self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in the broader mechanism—supporting the argument that motivation may require efficacy-related pathways to become readiness-relevant behavior.

4.2.4 Explaining Divergence

Several context-sensitive explanations are plausible. First, in suburban labor markets where formal opportunities are more limited, motivation may not differentiate readiness because many individuals share similar aspirations while facing similar constraints; thus, observable readiness depends more on capabilities and psychological self-regulation than on motivational desire. Second, motivation measures often capture "intention" or "drive," whereas readiness is assessed as a more concrete state of preparedness. This measurement distance can attenuate direct effects if intermediate variables (training participation, skill acquisition, confidence building) are the true proximal determinants. The mediation logic is consistent with Indonesian findings where motivation contributes to readiness primarily through efficacy pathways (Mutiara & Sapruwan, 2024).

4.2.5 Why These Findings Matter

Practically, the findings suggest that interventions focused solely on "boosting motivation" are unlikely to produce substantial improvements in work readiness unless they are paired with structured soft-skill development and self-efficacy strengthening. Employability development frameworks emphasize integrated approaches that build skills, reflective capacity, and confidence in applying competencies (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). In this sense, the strongest leverage points for Generation Z readiness in Parung Panjang appear to be (1) developing interpersonal/intrapersonal competencies demanded by employers (Robles, 2012), and (2) cultivating efficacy beliefs through mastery experiences, feedback, and progressive challenges (Bandura, 1986; 1997).

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Research Summary

This study assessed the effects of work motivation, soft skills, and self-efficacy on work readiness among Generation Z in Parung Panjang, Kabupaten Bogor, using a cross-sectional quantitative design and multiple linear regression analysis. The results show that: (1) work motivation has a positive but statistically insignificant relationship with work readiness; (2) soft skills significantly and positively influence work readiness; and (3) self-efficacy significantly and positively influences work readiness and is the strongest predictor.

These findings indicate that work readiness is primarily shaped by transferable competencies and efficacy beliefs rather than motivational drive alone. Consistent with social cognitive reasoning, efficacy beliefs appear to be a key psychological resource that enables young individuals to translate preparation efforts into readiness-relevant behaviors (Bandura, 1986; 1997).

5.2 Practical Implications

For Generation Z individuals, the priority is to strengthen soft skills and self-efficacy simultaneously. Soft skills can be built through deliberate practice in communication, teamwork, professionalism, and adaptability—competencies consistently highlighted by employers (Robles, 2012). Self-efficacy can be strengthened through mastery experiences, structured feedback, and incremental challenges that build confidence in executing work-like tasks (Bandura, 1986).

For educational institutions and training providers, the implication is to embed employability development into curricula through project-based learning, presentation-intensive assignments, workplace simulations, and reflective portfolios. Integrated employability frameworks emphasize combining skill development with confidence building and career learning to produce "work-ready" graduates (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Caballero et al., 2011).

For regional workforce stakeholders, programs aimed at reducing youth unemployment should move beyond motivational campaigns toward structured employability interventions that develop transferable competencies and efficacy beliefs. Evidence from Indonesian contexts suggests that efficacy-related mechanisms can be pivotal in shaping readiness, including in Generation Z populations (Mutiara & Sapruwan, 2024; Damayantie & Kustini, 2022).

5.3 Key Contributions

The study contributes by clarifying the relative importance of predictors of work readiness in a suburban Indonesian Generation Z context: self-efficacy and soft skills are decisive, while motivation

does not show a direct significant effect. This pattern supports a more precise theoretical claim that readiness is driven by capability resources and confidence mechanisms (Bandura, 1986; Heckman & Kautz, 2012).

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; observed relationships may reflect reverse causation (e.g., individuals with higher readiness developing greater self-efficacy) or third-variable confounding. Longitudinal designs tracking Generation Z from pre-employment through labor market entry would strengthen causal claims. Second, all variables were measured via self-report from single respondents at one time point, creating vulnerability to common method variance. Although Harman's test suggested acceptable levels, future research should incorporate multi-source assessments such as employer-rated readiness or behavioral competency demonstrations. Third, the non-probability sampling strategy and single-district focus limit generalizability; findings may not extend to urban Generation Z or different suburban contexts. Multi-site comparative studies are recommended. Fourth, the measurement of work motivation using a general scale may inadequately capture nuanced motivational processes; domain-specific scales measuring implementation intentions or job-search self-regulation may yield stronger predictive validity. Fifth, potential omitted variables—including family socioeconomic status, social capital, and prior work experience—may confound observed relationships. Future research incorporating these controls would enhance model specification. Finally, given evidence that motivation may operate indirectly through self-efficacy, mediation and moderated mediation designs explicitly testing such pathways are strongly recommended.

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