


The Role of Soft Skills in Improving the Job Readiness of Study Program Graduates: A Study on Critical Thinking in Accounting Education, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i4.966>

*Yonna Anggayu Putri, Mutia Seplinda, Harmelia 

¹Akuntansi, Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang, Indonesia

²³Manajemen, Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: yonnaanggayu@upiyptk.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to identify the influence of soft skills (about critical thinking) on the work readiness of accounting graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang. In this study, soft skills about critical thinking function as an independent variable (X), while work readiness is the dependent variable (Y). The population studied included all students of the accounting study program, class of 2021, totaling 150 students. The sampling method used was purposive sampling, so that the sample in this study consisted of 100 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires and documentation, and data analysis was carried out using descriptive percentage analysis, instrument testing, and hypothesis testing. Instrument testing includes validity testing and reliability testing, while hypothesis testing includes simple linear regression testing, coefficient of determination (R^2) testing, and t-testing. The results of the simple regression analysis show the equation $Y = 36.924 + 0.143X$, which means that if the soft skill value is zero, then the work readiness will reach 0.143. From the results of data processing and analysis that have been carried out, it can be concluded that soft skills have a positive influence of 0.143 on the work readiness of accounting graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Putra Indonesia University YPTK Padang.

Keyword: *Soft Skills, Job Readiness*

Article History:

Received 26th May 2025

Accepted 27th July 2025

Published 28th July 2025



INTRODUCTION

Student is a term for individuals who are pursuing higher education in various universities, including high schools, academies, and especially universities. Historically, students from different countries have played an important role in the development of their respective histories (Damayantie & Kustini, 2022). Soft skills, on the other hand, refer to abilities that individuals naturally possess, including emotional and social intelligence, as well as the ability to communicate or interact with others (Isfarhani, 2021). This suggests that the soft skills obtained in higher education have a significant impact on the job readiness of graduates (Kustini et al., 2021).

The Indonesian education system is also required to be able to produce graduates who are competitive and have adequate skills. The number of accounting graduates in Indonesia reaches more than 30,000 people per year, but only about 20,000 people become registered accountants. The condition of student readiness in preparing for a career basically depends on the learning design provided by the university. (Rista Dewi, 2023) (Andika, 2020) (Prabowo, 2015)

Factors that employers consider, in addition to accounting technical skills, are *soft skills* (Helena, 2024). As many as 77% of employers agree to consider soft skills in the hiring process (Iqbal et al., 2022). Soft skills are very important in the world of work, because current and

future employers emphasize the development of soft skills (wiji). This is in line with the results of research that show that soft skills determine 75% of career success and the rest are determined by hard skills (Amarina & Fitrioso, 2017). In line with this, IFAC (International Federation of Accountants) which in An Illustrative Competency Framework for Accounting Technicians has 5 (five) skills that must be possessed by accounting students consisting of: Digital skills (big data analytic), communicating effectively, critical thinking, personal organization and teamwork and Meeting customer needs and professionalism (IFAC).

Critical thinking is a person's ability to analyze information logically, objectively, and deeply before making a decision or forming a belief. Individuals who have the ability to think critically do not immediately accept information just like that, but rather evaluate the evidence, consider different points of view, and assess the validity of existing arguments. Critical thinking also involves the process of interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and explaining information based on rational and systematic reasoning standards. In the context of the world of work, this ability is very important because it helps individuals in solving complex problems, making informed decisions, and avoiding bias or misjudgment. Therefore, critical thinking is one of the soft skills that are urgently needed, especially by new graduates who will enter the professional world and are expected to be able to be analytical, reflective, and rational in facing various job challenges.

Job readiness will be formed when a person has reached a level of maturity, both mental and physical, and has relevant experience. Job readiness is an individual's ability to improve their ability to work, which includes skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Moreover (Stevani & Yulhendri, 2014) explains that job readiness includes the entire state of a person which includes the suitability between experience, physical and mental maturity, and the ability to carry out a job. In this context, companies consider having employees who are ready to work is very important, because these employees will have various advantages in their abilities and knowledge to face the challenges of the times. Some factors that can support job readiness include knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which in turn can increase students' confidence in their roles and responsibilities (Agusta, 2014).

In research by (Agusta, 2014), job readiness is defined as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that enable recent graduates to make a productive contribution to the achievement of the goals of the organization in which they work. A person who is ready to work must have confidence in his or her abilities, and be ready to undertake various types of work, both in accordance with the field of study and those that are not. Therefore, students need to feel confident that they have prepared themselves well to face the world of work, so that they are able to answer every challenge and carry out the responsibilities they face. It is important for them to strengthen their soft skills so that their job readiness can increase, so that they can get a job that suits their abilities and skills, and feel comfortable in doing the job (Firda & Sunarti, 2022)

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that soft skills have a significant influence on students' work readiness (Aini, 2022). The higher a person's mastery of soft skills, the greater the work readiness he will get. This is in line with research conducted by (Wijayani et al., 2024) which states that strengthening students' soft skills will make it easier to choose a job that suits their skills. Therefore, increasing work readiness is crucial so that students can be absorbed in the world of work.

Based on this, the author is interested in further studying in a research entitled "The Role of Soft Skills in Improving the Job Readiness of Graduates of the Accounting Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang".

METHODS

This study is a quantitative descriptive study that investigates independent variables, namely Soft Skills about critical thinking (X) and one dependent variable, namely Job Readiness (Y). To collect data, the researcher used primary data obtained through a questionnaire distributed to students of the Faculty of Economics and Business class of 2021.

The questionnaire consists of several indicators for each variable. The indicators for the Soft Skill variable refer to Sharma's (2011:21) research, which includes: 1) communication skills, 2) cooperation, 3) responsibility, 4) honesty, and 5) adaptation. Meanwhile, the indicators of job readiness according to Fitriyanto quoted in Asiyah (2017) include: 1) the ability to consider logically and objectively, 2) the right attitude and values, 3) ambition to advance, 4) strong motivation in work, and 5) adequate skills and knowledge.

The population of this study consists of 150 students of the faculty of economics and business class of 2021, and the sample used is 100 students. The sampling technique applied is Purposive Sampling because the respondents have special criteria, namely accounting students, considering that the population in the study is relevant to the purpose of the research. The researcher also used the SPSS method to analyze the data.

The hypothesis tested in this study states that soft skills are estimated to have a positive and significant influence on the work readiness of final year students at the faculty of economics and business, Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test in this study is used to test the accuracy and precision of a measuring instrument in performing its measurement function. A research indicator is said to be valid if the statement in the study is able to reveal something measured by the questionnaire.

Table 1 Validity Test Results

Variable X ₁	Calculation	><	rtabel	Itself.	><	Alpha	Information
X1.1	0,596	>	0,3610	0,001	<	0,05	Valid
X1.2	0,595	>	0,3610	0,001	<	0,05	Valid
X1.3	0,612	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
X1.4	0,606	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
X1.5	0,421	>	0,3610	0,021	<	0,05	Valid
X1.6	0,039	<	0,3610	0,837	>	0,05	Invalid
X1.7	0,670	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
X1.8	0,358	<	0,3610	0,052	>	0,05	Invalid
Variabel Y	Calculation	><	rtabel	Itself.	><	Alpha	Information
Y.1	0,208	<	0,3610	0,270	>	0,05	Invalid
Y.2	0,291	<	0,3610	0,118	>	0,05	Invalid
Y.3	0,598	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.4	0,708	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.5	0,639	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.6	0,739	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.7	0,755	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.8	0,798	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.9	0,687	>	0,3610	0,000	<	0,05	Valid
Y.10	0,339	<	0,3610	0,067	>	0,05	Invalid
Y.11	0,522	>	0,3610	0,003	<	0,05	Valid
Y.12	0,469	>	0,3610	0,009	<	0,05	Valid
Y.13	0,546	>	0,3610	0,002	<	0,05	Valid

Based on the results of the test table above for the variables, it can be known as follows: (a) Soft Skill about critical thinking (X1) shows that r calculates $> r$ of the table so that it is declared valid. The test results for the soft skill instrument were obtained 6 valid items and 2 invalid items. (b) Work Readiness (Y) shows that r calculates $> r$ table so that it is declared valid. The results of the trial for business continuity instruments were obtained with 10 valid items and 3 invalid items.

The reliability test is carried out by calculating the alpha coefficient (cronbach) of each instrument in one variable. The instrument used in the variable is said to be reliable if it has a Cronbach coefficient of alpha greater than 0.60

Table 2 Reliability Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	><	Cut off	Information
And	0,738	>	0,600	Reliabel

X	0,672	>	0,600	Reliabel
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Source: data processed with SPSS

Table 2 concludes that the soft skill variables of critical thinking (X) and work readiness (Y) each have a Cronbach alpha value greater than 0.60, so it can be interpreted that all research indicators are reliable to be used as a measuring tool.

Normality Test

The normality test aims to test whether in the regression model, the interfering or residual variables have a normal distribution. To test whether the data is normally distributed or not, a statistical test is carried out the One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The data is normally distributed if it has a significance value greater than 0.05.

Table 3 Normality Test Results

N	100
Asymp.Sig-(2-tailed)	0,059

Source: data processed with SPSS

Table 3 shows that the significance value of the normality test carried out has a value of 0.059, where 0.059 is greater than 0.05, so that the data is distributed normally.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test was carried out to find out whether in the regression model used there was variance disparity from the residual of one observation to another. A good regression model is a regression model that has a variant from the residual of one observation to another observation. If the significance value is greater than 0.05, then the data does not heterokedasticity.

Table 4 Heteroscedastisite Test Results

Capital	Itself	Information
Soft Skills about critical thinking	0,213	Heteroscedasticity does not occur

Source: data processed with SPSS

Table 4 shows that the independent variable has a significance probability value greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that heteroscedasticity does not occur in the regression model.

Multicolonality Test

The multicolonality test was carried out to test whether a regression model found a correlation between independent variables or not. The regression model is said to be good if the correlation between independent variables is close to zero or no correlation. The existence or absence of multicollinearity can be seen from the magnitude of the Tolerant Value and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). If the Tolerance Value is greater than 0.10 with a VIF value less than 10, then it is stated that there is no multicollinearity.

Table 5 Multicolonality Test Results

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	BRIGHT
Soft Skills about critical thinking	0,995	1,005

Source: data processed with SPSS

Based on Table 5, it shows that the value of each independent variable is greater than 0.10 and the VIF value is less than equal to 10, which means that all independent variables in this study do not occur multicollinearity.

Simple Linear Regression

Simple linear regression is the relationship in a linear manner between an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Y). This analysis is to find out the direction of the relationship between variables.

Tabel 6 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	.523	.274	.259	3.566

Source: data processed with SPSS

Predictors: (Constant), Soft Skills

The R square value obtained is 27.4 %. So it can be interpreted that the independent variable X has a contribution effect of 27.4% on the variable Y.

Table 7 ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Itself
Regression	464.943	1	232.471	18.286	.021
Residual	1233.167	97	12.713		
Total	1698.110	99			

Source: data processed with SPSS

Dependent Variable: Job readiness

Predictors: (Constant), Soft Skills tentang berfikir kritis

The significance test table above is used to determine the level of significance or linearity of regression. The criteria can be determined based on the significance value test (sig), provided that the sig value is < 0.05 . Based on the table above, the value of sig. = 0.021, meaning that the sig $<$ of the significant criterion of 0.05. Thus, the regression equation model based on the research data is significant, or the regression equation model meets the criteria.

Table 8 Coefficient

Capital	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T
	B	Std.Error		
Constant	36.924	2.143		17.92
Soft Skills	.143	.078	.137	1.58

Source: data processed with SPSS

Dependent Variable: Job Readiness

Regression equation: $y = a + bX$

$Y = 36.924 + 0.143X$

The constant is 36,924, where the value is positive with a significance level of 0.000. This means that if it is assumed that the value of the soft skills variable (X) and does not increase (constant/fixed), then the work readiness (Y) is in good condition (positive). The regression coefficient of the soft skills variable (X) is 0.143 (positive), meaning that every increase in soft skills will increase work readiness (Y), but the increase is not significant.

CONCLUSION

The results of the simple regression analysis show that the equation $Y = 36.924 + 0.143X$, the regression equation $Y = 36.924 + 0.143X$ shows that for every one unit increase in the independent variable X, the value of the dependent variable Y will increase by 0.143. The number 36,924 is the value of Y when X equals zero, which is referred to as intercept which means that if the value of soft skills is zero, then the work readiness will reach 0. 143. From the results of the processing and analysis of the data that has been carried out, it can be concluded that soft skills have a positive influence of 0.143 on the work readiness of students who graduated from Accounting, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang.

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