



The Influence of Soft and Hard Skill Competencies on Work Readiness through Self-Efficacy among Hospitality Students at SMKs in Greater Malang: Evidence from 101 Hotel Malang OJ

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Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of soft skills and hard skills on the work readiness of Hospitality Vocational High School students in Malang Raya, with self-efficacy examined as a mediating construct within the industrial internship setting at THE 101 Hotel Malang OJ. The research is motivated by the persistent gap between the competencies expected by the hospitality industry and the actual readiness demonstrated by students during field practice. A quantitative research design employing Structural Equation Model Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS) was utilized to analysis the direct and indirect effects among the studied variables. The empirical results demonstrate that both soft skills and hard skills significantly enhance students' self-efficacy, and hard skills exert a direct positive effect on work readiness. Self-efficacy also exhibits a substantial positive influence on work readiness and functions as a mediating mechanism linking soft skills and hard skills to work readiness. These findings align with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1997) and the Social Cognitive Career Theory articulated by Lent et al. (2020), which underscore the pivotal role of self-efficacy in translating individual competencies into effective performance outcomes. Overall, the study reinforces that improving students' work readiness requires not only strengthening technical and non-technical competencies but also systematically developing their psychological readiness through authentic industry experience and structured competency-based learning.

Keywords: Hard Skills; Self Efficacy; Soft Skills; Work Readiness

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of the hospitality industry requires a workforce equipped with both strong hard skills and well-developed soft skills to ensure service excellence. Vocational High Schools specializing in hospitality play a strategic role in preparing work-ready graduates through industry-based learning and Field Work Practice (PKL). However, empirical conditions show that PKL implementation has not fully resulted in optimal student job readiness, particularly in star-rated hotels with strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Internal reports from the Human Resource Development (HRD) division of The 101 Hotel Malang OJ indicate that several PKL students still experience low confidence, inconsistency in SOP implementation, and difficulties in professional communication within a dynamic hotel environment. These findings are consistent with national reports from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (2023), which reveal that workforce unpreparedness in the tourism sector is largely driven by weak soft skills (63%) and suboptimal hard skills that do not meet industry standards (37%). Beyond technical competence, job readiness is influenced by internal psychological factors, particularly self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations. In hospitality settings characterized by high service pressure and continuous guest interaction, self-efficacy plays a critical role in determining how students apply their competencies, cope with work demands, and maintain performance consistency.

Previous studies have reported inconsistent findings regarding the determinants of job readiness. Several studies indicate that soft skills positively influence job readiness through self-efficacy (Suryani, 2020), while others suggest that hard skills exert a direct effect without psychological mediation (Andika, 2020). In contrast, Hakim and Rahmawati (2021) emphasize that strong hard skills alone are insufficient when students' self-efficacy is low. Despite these findings, most prior studies were conducted in general vocational or short-term training contexts and did not specifically examine hospitality vocational students undertaking internships in star-rated hotels with standardized and service-intensive operational systems. Furthermore, empirical studies that simultaneously test soft skills, hard skills, and self-efficacy within a single integrative structural model remain limited. This study addresses these gaps by empirically examining the role of self-efficacy as a mediating mechanism linking soft skills and hard skills to job readiness among hospitality vocational students undertaking PKL at a four-star hotel. The novelty of this study lies in its contextual specificity and integrative model, providing new empirical evidence that job readiness is not merely the outcome of competence acquisition, but also the result of psychological processes that enable students to effectively translate competencies into real workplace performance within the hospitality industry.

This study aims to empirically analysis the influence of soft skill and hard skill competencies on the job readiness of hospitality vocational students in Malang Raya through self-efficacy during Field Work Practice at The 101 Hotel Malang OJ. Specifically, this study aims to:

- Analyzing the influence of soft skills on the self-efficacy of internship students
- Analyzing the influence of hard skills on the self-efficacy of internship students
- Analyzing the influence of soft skills on the work readiness of internship students
- Analyzing the influence of hard skills on the work readiness of internship students
- Analyzing the influence of self-efficacy on the work readiness of internship students
- Analyzing the influence of soft skills on the work readiness of internship students through self-efficacy
- Analyzing the influence of hard skills on the work readiness of internship students through self-efficacy

This study strengthens Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) and Social Cognitive Career Theory by empirically confirming self-efficacy as a key psychological mechanism that connects competence to job readiness. The findings extend employability research in the hospitality sector by demonstrating that soft skills and hard skills do not operate independently, but interact through self-efficacy to shape students' readiness for work.

Practical Contribution Practically, the findings provide evidence-based guidance for hospitality vocational schools and the hotel industry in designing PKL programs that balance technical skill mastery with psychological empowerment. By systematically strengthening students' self-efficacy through mentoring, feedback, and structured task exposure, educational institutions and industry partners can produce graduates who are not only technically competent, but also psychologically ready to meet the demands of the hospitality industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work Readiness in the Hospitality Industry

Work readiness refers to an individual's ability to enter the workforce with adequate technical competence, professional attitudes, and psychological preparedness (Super, 1990). In the hospitality industry, work readiness

is characterized by the ability to perform operational tasks according to Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), demonstrate professional behavior, adapt to service dynamics, and manage work pressure effectively. For vocational hospitality students, work readiness is a critical outcome of industry-based learning and field work practice (PKL), reflecting the alignment between educational outcomes and industry demands.

2.2 Soft Skills and Hard Skills

Soft skills are non-technical competencies such as communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, professionalism, and problem-solving that support service quality and work effectiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2019). In hospitality settings, soft skills play a crucial role in guest interaction, service delivery, and team coordination. Hard skills refer to technical and procedural competencies required to perform job-specific tasks in accordance with industry standards, including operational skills, equipment handling, and procedural compliance (Spencer and Spencer (1993). In hotel operations, hard skills form the foundation for task accuracy, efficiency, and service consistency.

2.3 Self-Efficacy as a Psychological Mechanism

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura (1997). Self-efficacy influences behavioral choices, effort, persistence, resilience under pressure, and performance quality. In the context of hospitality internships, students with high self-efficacy tend to show greater confidence, initiative, and stability in performing tasks within a demanding service environment. According to Social Cognitive Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory, competence alone does not automatically translate into work readiness without strong self-efficacy, which functions as a psychological mechanism that enables individuals to apply their competencies effectively in real work situations (Bandura, 1997; Lent et al., 2020).

2.4 Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Based on theoretical and empirical studies, work readiness of vocational hospitality students is influenced by both technical and non-technical competencies, self-efficacy playing a mediating role. Soft skills and hard skills are expected to enhance self-efficacy, which in turn strengthens students' work readiness. Additionally, hard skills may directly influence work readiness due to their operational nature, while the impact of soft skills is expected to be more effective through psychological mediation.

Accordingly, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

H1: Soft skills have a positive effect on students self-efficacy.

H2: Hard skills have a positive effect on students self-efficacy.

H3: Soft skills have a positive effect on students work readiness.

H4: Hard skills have a positive effect on students work readiness.

H5: Self efficacy has a positive effect on students work readiness.

H6: Soft skills have a positive effect on work readiness through self-efficacy.

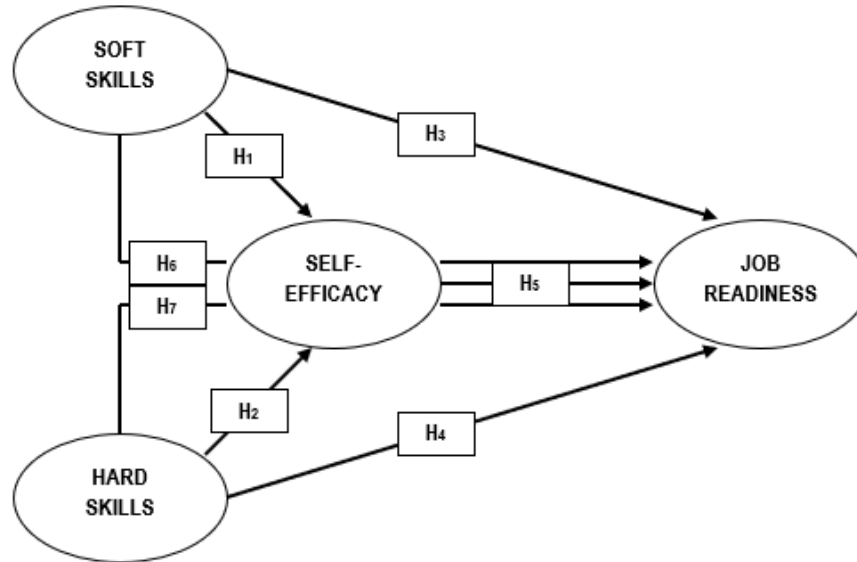
H7: Hard skills have a positive effect on work readiness through self-efficacy.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between soft skills, hard skills, self-efficacy, and students' work readiness. The research focused on testing both direct and indirect effects through self-efficacy as a mediating variable within the context of vocational hospitality education. The population of this study consisted of 215 vocational high school hospitality students in Malang Raya who had participated in Field Work Practice (PKL) at The 101 Hotel Malang OJ. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in 143 respondents. The sampling technique applied was proportional random sampling, ensuring representative participation across departments involved in hotel operations. This study utilized quantitative data obtained from primary sources. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to PKL students. The research instrument employed a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure four constructs: soft skills, hard skills, self-efficacy, and work readiness. All indicators were developed based on established theories and previous empirical studies to ensure content validity. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural

Equation Model (PLS-SEM). The analysis consisted of two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to assess validity and reliability, and evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the proposed hypotheses. This method was selected due to its suitability for predictive analysis and its ability to handle complex models with mediating variables.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

Respondents in this study were vocational hospitality students undertaking Field Work Practice (PKL) at The 101 Hotel Malang OJ, a four-star hotel operating under strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). The respondents were actively involved in operational departments, particularly in housekeeping and service-related activities, making them an appropriate representation for examining competency development and work readiness in the hospitality industry context.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 Years	143	100%
Gender	Male	38	27%
	Female	105	73%
Education Level	SMK	143	100%
Internship Periode	1-5 Months	143	100%
Employment Status	Active		
	Internship Students	143	100%

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

The evaluation of the measurement model confirms that all indicators meet the criteria of validity and reliability. Outer loading values for all constructs exceed the minimum acceptable threshold (≥ 0.50), while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values demonstrate strong internal consistency across constructs. These results indicate that the measurement instruments adequately capture hospitality-related soft skills, hard skills, self-efficacy, and work readiness.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test of Research Variables

Indikator	Item	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
SOFT SKILLS			0.924	0.937	0.624
Effective communication skills (X1.1)	X1.1.2	0.795			
	X1.2.1	0.806			
Teamwork skills (X1.2)	X1.2.2	0.795			
	X1.3.1	0.767			
Problem Solving (X1.3)	X1.3.2	0.728			
	X1.4.1	0.791			
Emotional Intelligence (X1.4)	X1.4.2	0.827			
	X1.5.1	0.817			
Professionalisme (X1.5)	X1.5.2	0.779			
	HARD SKILLS			0.921	0.933
Technical Knowledge (X2.1)	X2.1.1	0.795			
	X2.1.2	0.775			
Practical Skills (X2.2)	X2.2.1	0.821			
	X2.2.2	0.784			
Procedural Competence (X2.3)	X2.3.1	0.853			
	X2.3.2	0.779			
Technical Problem Solving (X2.4)	X2.4.1	0.718			
	X2.4.2	0.717			
Digital Skills (X2.5)	X2.5.1	0.678			
	X2.5.2	0.708			
SELF EFFICACY			0.930	0.942	0.622
Self-Confidence (Y1.1)	Y1.1.1	0.837			
	Y1.1.2	0.785			
Self-Control (Y1.2)	Y1.2.1	0.856			
	Y1.2.2	0.891			
Perseverance (Y1.3)	Y1.3.1	0.812			
	Y1.3.2	0.869			
Initiative (Y1.4)	Y1.4.1	0.501			
	Y1.4.2	0.707			
Emotional Management (Y1.5)	Y1.5.1	0.765			
	Y1.5.2	0.791			
WORK READINESS			0.922	0.934	0.589
Personal Work Characteristics (Y2.1)	Y2.1.1	0.841			
	Y2.1.2	0.776			
Work Competence (Y2.2)	Y2.2.1	0.737			

		Y2.2.2	0.796
Social Intelligence (Y2.3)		Y2.3.1	0.765
		Y2.3.2	0.766
Organizational (Y2.4)	Acumen	Y2.4.1	0.819
		Y2.4.2	0.694
Psychological (Y2.5)	Readiness	Y2.5.1	0.746
		Y2.5.2	0.720

4.3 Direct Effects on Self-Efficacy and Work Readiness

The structural model analysis reveals that soft skills have a significant positive effect on self-efficacy. This finding indicates that communication ability, teamwork, emotional regulation, and professionalism play a critical role in strengthening students' confidence when interacting with guests and supervisors in a hotel environment. However, soft skills do not show a significant direct effect on work readiness. This suggests that, in hospitality operations, service-related attitudes and interpersonal skills alone are insufficient to ensure work readiness without internal psychological confidence. Hard skills, on the other hand, demonstrate a significant positive effect on both self-efficacy and work readiness. Mastery of technical procedures, adherence to SOPs, and operational accuracy directly enhance students' readiness to perform hotel tasks effectively. Furthermore, self-efficacy exhibits a strong and significant influence on work readiness, confirming that students' confidence in their abilities determines their consistency, adaptability, and service performance in a dynamic hospitality setting.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing of Direct Effect Research

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
X1 → Y1	0.662	0.658	0.095	6.936	0.000
X1 → Y2	0.162	0.158	0.087	1.861	0.063
X2 → Y1	0.280	0.283	0.097	2.880	0.004
X2 → Y2	0.188	0.190	0.063	2.988	0.003
Y1 → Y2	0.620	0.623	0.078	7.902	0.000

4.4 Mediation Effects of Self-Efficacy

The mediation analysis indicates that self-efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between soft skills and work readiness, as well as between hard skills and work readiness. These findings suggest that both non-technical and technical competencies contribute optimally to job readiness when students have strong confidence in applying those competencies. In hospitality operations, self-efficacy serves as a psychological mechanism that translates skill mastery into professional service behavior.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing of Indirect Influence Research (Mediation Test)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
X1 → Y1 → Y2	0.410	0.408	0.072	5.714	0.000
X2 → Y1 → Y2	0.173	0.178	0.069	2.506	0.012

4.5 Discussion

The results of the study indicate that soft skills are the most dominant factor in shaping the self-efficacy of internship students in the hospitality industry ($\beta = 0.662$). Communication skills, teamwork, emotional regulation, and professionalism play a crucial role in building students' confidence when performing hotel service tasks. This finding aligns with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) and reinforces the findings of Suryani (2020), who emphasized the contribution of soft skills to the psychological readiness of vocational students. However, soft skills did not directly influence job readiness ($p = 0.063$). In the context of star-rated hotels with strict SOPs, interpersonal competence alone is insufficient to foster job readiness. This finding aligns with Lestari (2019) and Hakim and Rahmawati (2021), who stated that soft skills have an optimal impact when mediated by self-efficacy. Conversely,

hard skills significantly influenced self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.280$; $p = 0.004$) and job readiness ($\beta = 0.182$; $p = 0.003$). Mastery of technical skills and standard operating procedures (SOPs) provided a mastery experience that strengthened students' self-confidence, in line with Bandura (1997) and supporting Andika's (2020) findings in the context of hospitality operations work. Furthermore, self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of job readiness ($\beta = 0.620$; $p = 0.000$). This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2020), which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in adaptation, persistence, and job performance in service environments. The results of the mediation test confirmed that self-efficacy acts as a key mediator. The indirect effect of soft skills on job readiness through self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.410$) is greater than the direct effect of hard skills, while hard skills also contribute through an indirect pathway ($\beta = 0.173$). These findings confirm that hotel students' job readiness is shaped by the integration of technical, non-technical, and internal psychological competencies, particularly in the context of internships in star-rated hotels.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study offers a novel contribution by empirically demonstrating that self-efficacy is the central psychological mechanism that transforms soft skills and hard skills into actual work readiness among hospitality vocational students undertaking internships in a four-star hotel context. Unlike previous studies that examined competencies in isolation, this research integrates technical competence, interpersonal competence, and psychological readiness within a single PLS-SEM model. The findings confirm that soft skills do not directly translate into work readiness in a highly standardized hospitality environment. Instead, their impact becomes meaningful only when mediated by self-efficacy. This result challenges the common assumption that soft skills automatically enhance employability and highlights the need for psychological reinforcement during internship programs. In contrast, hard skills exert both direct and indirect effects on work readiness, reflecting the operational demands of star-rated hotels that prioritize technical accuracy and SOP compliance. Furthermore, self-efficacy emerges as the most strategic predictor of work readiness, influencing students' mental preparedness, confidence in task execution, and professional behavior. These findings extend Social Cognitive Theory by providing empirical evidence that self-efficacy functions not merely as an individual belief, but as a bridging construct that activates competencies into performance readiness within hospitality internships.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications (Scientific Contribution)

This study advances hospitality education research by refining the employability framework through a competency–psychological integration model. The novelty lies in positioning self-efficacy as a functional mediator rather than a parallel predictor, thereby clarifying why previous studies reported inconsistent findings regarding the effects of soft skills and hard skills on work readiness. By grounding the model in Social Cognitive Theory and testing it within a four-star hotel internship setting, this research provides context-specific empirical evidence that strengthens theory applicability in hospitality education.

Practical Implications for Hospitality Education

For hospitality vocational schools, the findings imply that curriculum design should move beyond competency accumulation toward self-efficacy-oriented learning. Soft skill training must be embedded within experiential learning that allows students to successfully perform tasks, receive feedback, and reflect on their achievements. Similarly, hard skill instruction should be aligned with real hotel SOPs and supported by digital competency training to reinforce students' confidence in handling operational systems.

Practical Implications for the Hospitality Industry

For the hotel industry, particularly internship-hosting hotels, this study suggests that effective internship programs should combine technical supervision with psychological empowerment strategies. Providing students with structured autonomy, supervised decision-making opportunities, and continuous performance feedback can significantly strengthen self-efficacy, enabling students to internalize competencies and demonstrate higher work readiness. This approach positions internships not merely as task execution, but as a strategic talent development process.

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