

The Effect Of Internship Experience, *Soft Skills*, And Social Support On Work Readiness Of Students Of The Faculty Of Economics And Business, State University Of Makassar With *Learning Organization* As An Intervening Variable

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of internship experience, social skills, and social support on the work readiness of economics students at Makassar State University, and Learning Organization as a mediating variable in the relationship between these variables. A quantitative approach was used in this study. Participants in this study consisted entirely of students of the Department of Economics, Makassar State University, and a sample of 271 students was identified using a purposive sampling technique. This data analysis was carried out using PLS-SEM. The results of the study found that internship experience, soft skills, and social support had a positive and significant effect on students' work readiness. Furthermore, learning organization was proven to act as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between students' internship experience, soft skills, social support, and work readiness. These findings indicate that improving the quality of internships, developing soft skill, and maximizing social support, supported by an effective learning organization environment, in its role to prepare students for professional and competitive performance in the workplace.

Keywords: *Internship Experience, Soft Skills, Social Support, Learning Organization, Job Readiness.*

INTRODUCTION

A nation's progress is largely determined by the quality of its human resources (HR). Higher education plays a strategic role in improving the quality of the workforce by producing competent, adaptable graduates who are competitive in the workforce. With globalization and an increasingly competitive labor market, universities need to produce not only academically competent graduates but also human resources who are ready to work according to the needs of the professional world (Sholeha and Widagdo, 2025). However, the dynamics of the workforce indicate that the job readiness of university graduates remains a critical concern. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data shows that unemployment among university graduates has increased in recent years, indicating a gap between graduates' skills and industry demands. This situation confirms that student job readiness is a strategic issue in higher education (Ginanjari Eko Ardhita et al., 2024). A student's job readiness reflects an individual's ability to meet the demands of the workforce, both cognitively and competencies. Career-ready students are more adaptable, more productive, and can contribute effectively to the workplace. Thus, work readiness is a crucial indicator of the success of higher education in producing graduates (Setyanti and Finulia, 2022). Internships are a learning tool that helps students prepare for the job market. Through internships, students gain real-world work experience, understand organizational culture, and apply theory to practice. These experiences help students understand the demands of the workplace and develop relevant professional skills (Suyanto et al., 2019). In addition to internships, *soft skills* also play a crucial role in preparing students for the workforce. *Soft skills*, such as communication, collaboration, and adapting to change, are essential aspects of the complex dynamics of the workplace. Mastering soft skills helps students build effective working relationships and solve professional problems (Maulidina & Vijanarka, 2023).

The Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, has 1,410 students graduating in 2022 and studying in various academic programs. Students receive academic guidance, internships, *soft skills development* through lectures, and social interactions on campus. However, differences in experience, degree of participation in educational activities, and social support received by students are characteristics of different work readiness. This situation makes the Faculty of Economics and Business a suitable environment to examine student work readiness more comprehensively, by considering the role of internship experience, *soft skills*, social support, and *learning organization*. In addition, *learning organization* is an appropriate approach to integrate internship experience, *soft skills development*, and social support into student work

preparation. *Learning organization* encourages continuous learning processes through knowledge sharing, reflection, and collaboration so that students can continue to develop their professional skills. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the effect of internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, with *learning organization* as an intervening variable.

Literature Review

Student job readiness can be explained by *human capital theory*, which emphasizes that education, training, and work experience are important investments in increasing individual productivity (Becker, 1964). The process of learning through direct experience, such as internships, is consistent with connectionist theory, which states that preparation and practice shape effective work behavior. Furthermore, career readiness theory emphasizes that job readiness is not only achieved through academic ability, but also requires *soft skills*, work ethic, and work experience. As explained in social cognitive career theory, social support plays a role in building students' self-efficacy and mental readiness. Furthermore, the concept of *a learning organization* encourages lifelong learning through collaboration and knowledge sharing, enabling students to integrate their experiences, skills, and environmental support into comprehensive professional skills relevant to the professional world.

Internship experience

Internship experience is a practice-based activity that allows students *to* participate directly in a real work environment, combining the application of theoretical knowledge with the acquisition of practical skills needed in the world of work (Puteri and Rozamuri, 2023). Through internships, students gain a true understanding of work culture, job responsibilities, and performance requirements applicable to organizations and industries (Chairunissa et al., 2024). Internship experiences have a positive impact on job readiness by teaching students to solve problems, adapt to the work environment, and indirectly develop job skills (Supriyanto et al., 2022). Noor et al. (2023) also stated that internship experience is a form of training and development that provides students with the opportunity to gain direct work experience. In addition, students who participate in internship programs usually demonstrate better mental preparation and professional attitudes (Amelia & Jatnika, 2024). Therefore, internship experience plays

a strategic role as a means of preparing students for work through an experiential learning process. general skills.

Soft skill

Non-technical competencies related to professional self-management and interactions with others, including aspects of communication, teamwork, ethics, adaptability, and self-control (Mahasneh & Thabet, 2015). *Soft skills* reflect attitudes, behaviors, and personal characteristics that play a crucial role in an individual's success in the workplace (Holford, 2019). *Soft skills* can improve students' job readiness because individuals who can communicate well and work effectively in teams can more easily adapt to dynamic work demands (Azizah et al., 2019; Yulianti and Khafid, 2015). Furthermore, *soft skills* are strongly influenced by various internal factors such as intellect, attitude, interests, and motivation, encouraging students to actively develop themselves through learning experiences and supporting activities during their studies (Suhardjono Riyanto Haribowo, 2022). Therefore, acquiring *soft skills* is an important foundation in preparing students to enter the workforce so they can contribute effectively, professionally, and sustainably in the workforce social support.

Social support

Forms of emotional, informational, or instrumental support provided by the environment, such as family, friends, teachers, or other stakeholders who play a role in a student's life (Xia et al., 2020). This support plays a crucial role as a source of psychological empowerment, helping students increase self-confidence, cope with stress, and prepare themselves for the challenges of the working world (Shu et al., 2020). Social support is closely related to the development of soft skills such as adaptability, communication skills, and teamwork, which are essential in professional situations (Tentama and Riskiana, 2020). Furthermore, additional tools available through access to career information, feedback from the academic environment, and social support can also help students develop into more mature, goal-oriented, and work-ready individuals (Zhao et al., 2021). Therefore, social support is a crucial factor contributing to the development of students' psychological and competent work readiness.

Learning organization

A *learning organization* is an environment that encourages continuous learning through individual training and development. Rijal and Sesario (2024) explain that job training and career development play a crucial role in enhancing an individual's capacity to

optimally fulfill their professional roles. *A learning organization* can also be defined as a lifelong learning concept that encourages individuals and groups to continuously develop their knowledge, skills, and adaptability through reflection, collaboration, and knowledge sharing (Senge, 1990). In the context of higher education, the application of learning organization principles enables students to build a learning culture that is active, open, and responsive to changes in the academic and workplace environments. Students working in *a learning organization environment* tend to be more proactive in seeking experience, developing skills, and integrating internships, *soft skills*, and social support into a comprehensive professional skill set (Riwayati & Santoso, 2022). Furthermore, through collective learning activities such as discussions, teamwork, and shared reflection, students are able to strengthen their readiness to face the challenges of the workplace, which demands continuous collaboration and problem-solving skills (Marquardt, 2002). Thus, *learning organization* plays a role as an important mechanism that connects various factors that shape students' work readiness.

Work readiness

Work readiness is a complex state that reflects an individual's physical, mental, and emotional preparation, as well as mastery of the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to meet the demands of the workplace (Ramadan and Solehudin, 2020). This preparation demonstrates an individual's ability to respond effectively, responsibly, and professionally to the needs of society and the workplace. For students, work readiness is influenced not only by technical skills but also by adapting to change, communication skills in the workplace, and confidence in their abilities and *self-efficacy* (Setiarini et al., 2022). Students with a high level of responsibility tend to complete assignments on time and efficiently, and exhibit flexibility that allows them to adapt to changing work dynamics. Furthermore, strong communication skills support professional collaboration, and a positive outlook on one's abilities strengthens decision-making and problem-solving skills (Prianto et al., 2022). Thus, work readiness can be understood as the result of the integration of individual maturity, learning experiences, and adaptability that shape students' readiness to enter the workforce.

Framework of thinking

This study describes the relationship between independent variables, namely internship experience (X1), *soft skills* (X2), and social support (X3), with dependent variables, namely work readiness (Y), *learning organization* (Z) as intervening variables in students

of the Faculty of Economics and Trade, Makassar State University. The framework used in this study is explained as follows:

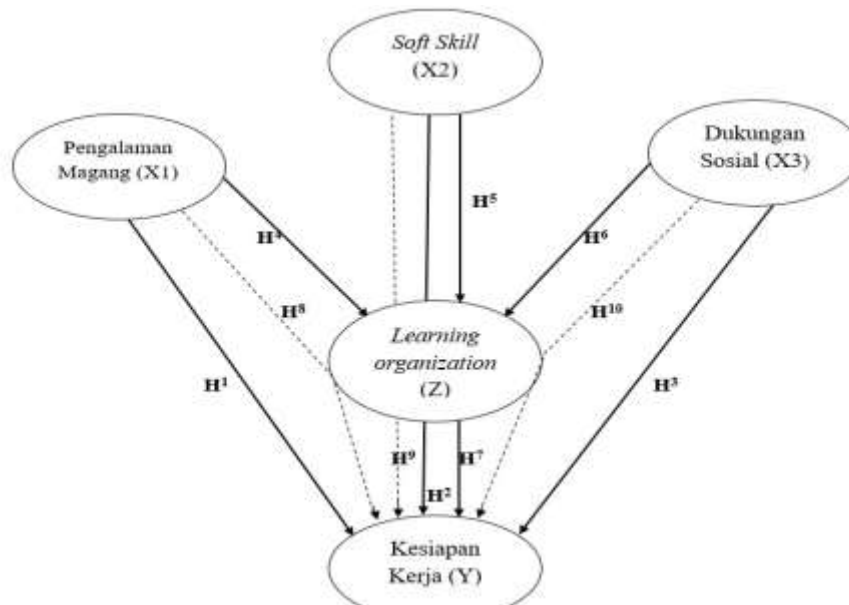


Figure 1. Framework

Hypothesis Development

Based on the empirical studies and theories that have been described, internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support are seen as important factors that influence student work readiness. Internship experience provides contextual learning through real work practices that encourage students to develop professional competencies and work attitudes. *Soft skills* act as adaptive capital that enables students to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems effectively in the work environment. Social support from lecturers, peers, and the academic environment strengthens students' self-confidence and involvement in the learning process. These three variables also play a role in forming a *learning organization*, namely a learning environment that encourages continuous learning, knowledge exchange, and collaborative cooperation. *Learning organization* then functions as a mechanism that strengthens the influence of internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support on student work readiness. Based on this, it can be hypothesized that internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support have a direct influence on student work readiness, and have an indirect influence through *learning organization* as an intervening variable.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal design that assesses the influence of internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support on students' work readiness, with *learning organization* as a mediating variable. The survey was conducted on 271 students of the Faculty of Economics and Management, Makassar State University who had participated in an internship program, selected through purposive sampling from a population of 840 students. Primary data were collected using a closed questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale according to the indicators of each variable. Data analysis was performed using PLS-SEM through SmartPLS 4.0, including testing validity, reliability, and structural relationships between variables. Hypotheses were tested with t-statistics and p- *values* at a significance level of 5%, so that the research findings provide an empirical picture of the factors that influence students' work readiness.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University (FEB UNM), located on the Gunungsari Campus, Jalan AP Pettarani, Makassar City. FEB UNM is a faculty that provides higher education in the fields of economics, management, accounting, digital business, entrepreneurship, and economic education, with an academic environment that supports practice-based learning and student competency development. These conditions make FEB UNM a relevant location in examining the influence of internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support on student work readiness, with *learning organization* as an intervening variable.

This study involved 271 2022 graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Commerce, Makassar State University, who participated in an internship program. Respondents enrolled in various study programs, with the most common being business administration, followed by accounting (Bachelor's degree), development economics, digital business, economics education, applied accounting (D4), accounting education, and entrepreneurship. Data were analyzed using the *Structural Equation Modeling – Partial Least Squares* (SEM-PLS) approach using SmartPLS software version 4.0 to test the direct and indirect effects between variables and obtain a comprehensive empirical picture of the factors influencing career readiness of students majoring in Economics and Business at UNM.

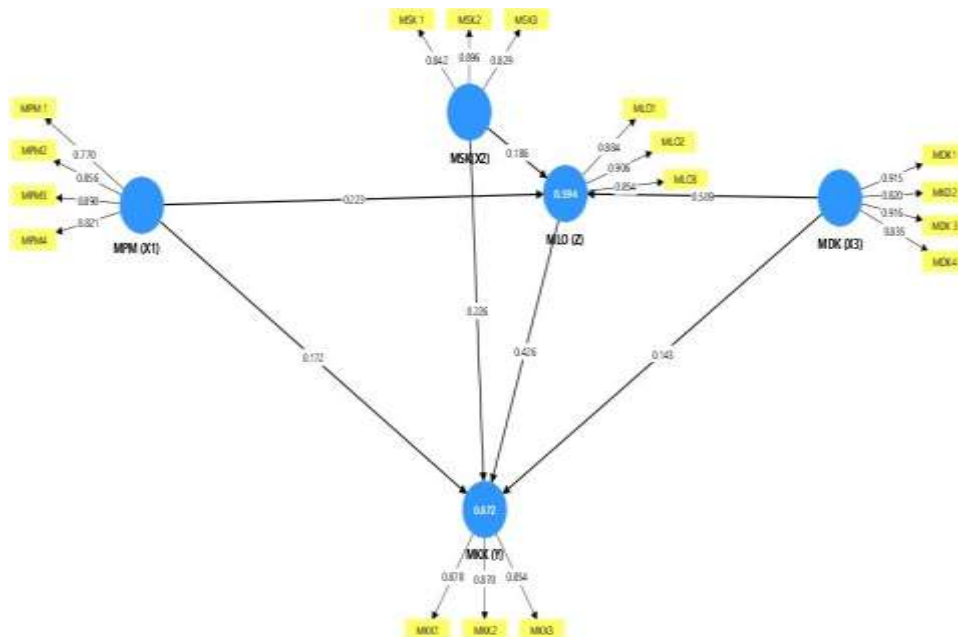


Figure 2. Structural Model

Source SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

1. Instrument Test and Data Validity

Before conducting the structural model analysis, the researcher first tested the feasibility of the data through validity and reliability tests using SmartPLS 4.0 software. The convergent validity test showed that all indicators had loading factor values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50. This indicates that each indicator is able to represent its construct well. Furthermore, the results of the construct reliability test showed that the Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and rho_A values were all above 0.70. This indicates that the instrument used in this study is reliable and consistent in measuring each variable. Thus, all questionnaire items were declared suitable for use in the structural model analysis.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability

Variables	Item	Validity Convergent	Reliability			
		Loading Factor	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_a	Rho_C

Experience Internship (X1)	MPM1	0.770	0.698	0.856	0.902	0.87
	MPM2	0,856				
	MPM3	0,89				
	MPM4	0,821				
Soft Skill (X2)	MSK1	0,842	0,733	0,818	0,892	0,822
	MSK2	0,896				
	MSK3	0.829				
Social Sup- port (X3)	MDK1	0.915	0.762	0.898	0.927	0.92
	MDK2	0.82				
	MDK3	0.916				
	MDK4	0.835				
Learning Organization (Z)	ML01	0.884	0.777	0.856	0.913	0.859
	ML02	0.906				
	ML03	0.854				
Work Readiness (Y)	MKK1	0.878	0.752	0,835	0,901	0,836
	MKK2	0,87				
	MKK3	0,854				

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

Table 2. *Discriminant Validity*

CROSS LOAD- ING						Fornell-Larcker				
Kode Item	X1 (MPM)	X2 (MSK)	X3 (MDK)	Z (MLO)	Y (MKK)	X1	X2	X3	Z	Y
MPM 1	0.77	0,507	0,308	0,391	0,389	0,83 5				
MPM 2	0,856	0,576	0,375	0,479	0,503		0,85 6			
MPM 3	0,89	0,57	0,389	0,52	0,598			0,87 3		
MPM 4	0,821	0,604	0,398	0,51	0,589				0,88 1	0,86 7
MSK1	0,586	0,84 2	0,442	0,562	0,6					
MSK2	0,607	0,89 6	0,427	0,473	0,579					
MSK3	0,544	0,82 9	0,39	0,465	0,516					
MDK 1	0,455	0,497	0,915	0,705	0,605					
MDK2	0,298	0,341	0,82	0,483	0,476					
MDK3	0,458	0,503	0,916	0,714	0,611					
MDK4	0,298	0,339	0,835	0,486	0,476					
MLO1	0,551	0,554	0,636	0,884	0,709					
MLO2	0,521	0,517	0,616	0,906	0,657					
MLO3	0,441	0,479	0,596	0,854	0,634					
MKK 1	0,572	0,566	0,531	0,661	0,878					
MKK2	0,544	0,573	0,5	0,616	0,87					
MKK3	0,532	0,586	0,6	0,69	0,854					

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

2. Structural Model Analysis

Test Results Hypothesis	Hypothesis	Std.D	T-Statistics	P Values	Go	Measurement model	Variable	Values and Categories
<i>direct Effect Analysis</i>	X1->Y	0.077	2,235	0.000		R ²	Y	0.672(Strong)
	X1->Z	0.061	3,667	0.000	Sig		Z	0.594 (Strong)
	X2->Y	0,09	2,506	0.000				
	X2->Z	0,065	2,878	0.000				
	X3>Y	0,054	2,627	0.000				
	X3>Z	0,047	10,744	0.000				
	Z>Y	0,076	5,625	0.000				
<i>Indirect Effect Analysis</i>							X1>Y	0,044 (Kecil)
						F ² .	X1->Z	0,064 (Kecil)
							X2->Y	0,074 (Kecil)
							X2->Z	0,042 (Kecil)
					Sig		X3>Y	0,031 (Kecil)
	X1->Z->Y	0,034	2,814	0,005			X3>Z	0.469 (Besar)

	X2->Z->Y	0.029	2,753	0.006			Z>Y	0.225 (Sedang)
	X3>Z>Y	0.045	4,858	0.000				

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing Results (2025)

Based on the results of the structural model analysis using SmartPLS, the Student Work Readiness (Y) variable shows an R^2 value of 0.672, which indicates that internship experience (X1), *soft skills* (X2), and social support (X3) together are able to explain 67.2% of the variation in student work readiness, while the remaining 32.8% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Meanwhile, *the learning organization* (Z) variable has an R^2 value of 0.594, indicating that the three independent factors explain 59.4% of the variation in learning organization, and the remaining 40.6% is influenced by other factors.

The F^2 test results show that internship experience has a small effect on job readiness (0.044) and learning organization (0.064). *Soft skills* also have a small effect on job readiness (0.074) and *learning organization* (0.042). Social support has a relatively small effect on job readiness (0.031), but a large effect on learning organization (0.469), indicating the importance of social support in creating a sustainable learning environment. *Learning organization* itself has a moderate effect on job readiness (0.225). Thus, although some independent variables have limited direct contributions, *learning organization* is proven to have a strategic role in improving students' overall job readiness.

Discussion

1. The Influence of Internship Experience on the Job Readiness of Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University

The results of the study indicate that internship experience has a positive and significant impact on the work readiness of students at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University. Students who optimally participate in internships tend to be better prepared for the world of work because they have the opportunity to directly apply theory to practice. This finding aligns with research by Agustin, Nurmalasari, and Sumiati (2025), which states that internship experience improves students' practical skills, understanding of work culture, and professionalism. Therefore, internship experience plays a crucial role as a strategy to prepare students to enter the workforce effectively and competently.

2. The Influence of Soft Skills on the Job Readiness of Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University

Soft skills have a positive and significant influence on students' job readiness. Students who possess effective communication skills, team collaboration, time management, and adaptability are better prepared for employment. *Soft skills* are crucial because the workplace demands a combination of academic and interpersonal skills. These findings align with Robles (2017) and Succi & Canovi (2020), who emphasize that communication skills, collaboration, work ethic, and adaptability are essential for success in a professional environment. Therefore, soft skills development should be a primary focus in higher education.

3. The Influence of Social Support on the Work Readiness of Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University

Social support has been shown to positively influence students' job readiness. Support from family, peers, and the academic environment helps students increase their self-confidence, motivation, and mental readiness for work. This finding is supported by research by Nuraini and Yuwono (2023), which showed that students with high social support are better able to navigate the world of work than those with minimal support. Social support also provides psychological support to cope with work-related stress and anxiety.

4. The Influence of Internship Experience on Learning Organization in Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University Internship experience plays a positive and significant role in shaping students' *learning organization*. Students who participate in internships tend to bring practical experience into the learning process, encouraging active, reflective, and collaborative learning. This is in accordance with Sulastri and Widodo (2023), who stated that practical work experience strengthens a collaborative learning culture. Students with internship experience are able to connect theory with practice, participate in discussions, and share experiences, thereby strengthening collective learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2018).

5. The Influence of Soft Skills on Learning Organization in Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University

Soft skills contribute positively and significantly to the formation of a *learning organization*. Students with communication skills, teamwork skills, and openness to feedback tend to be more active in collaborative learning. This finding is supported by Putri and Suyanto (2024)

and Widodo et al. (2022), who emphasize that interpersonal skills are a crucial foundation for team learning and the creation of a collective learning culture.

6. The Influence of Social Support on *Learning Organization* in Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University

Social support has been shown to foster the formation of *learning organizations*. Assistance from peers and lecturers strengthens constructive academic interactions, increases student participation, and fosters collaborative learning. Research by Mayanti, Akmal, et al. (2022) and Chen, et al. (2023) shows that social support enhances academic engagement and the development of reflective and interpersonal skills, thus laying the foundation for effective collective learning.

7. The Influence of Learning Organizations on Student Job Readiness at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University *Learning organizations* have a positive and significant impact on student job readiness. A collaborative and reflective learning environment enables students to develop *soft skills*, problem-solving abilities, and adapt to change. This is in line with Marsick & Watkins (2018) and Senge (2018), who emphasized that learning organizations facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills to professional contexts. Thus, *learning organizations* significantly support the improvement of student job readiness.

8. The Influence of Internship Experience on Students' Job Readiness through Learning Organization

Internship experiences positively impact students' job readiness through the role of *learning organizations* as mediators. *Learning organizations* strengthen the relationship between internships and job readiness, enabling students to reflect on their experiences, share learning, and develop collective understanding. This finding is supported by Prasetyo & Wulandari (2023), who stated that fieldwork experiences are more effective when supported by collaborative and reflective learning.

9. The Influence of Soft Skills on Student Work Readiness through Learning Organization

Mastering *soft skills* positively impacts job readiness through *learning organizations*. Collaborative learning environments enable students to continuously develop and internalize *soft skills*, which in turn increases employability (Putri & Suryanto, 2024). Thus, learning organizations are an important means of transferring *soft skills* to the workplace.

10. The Influence of Social Support on Student Work Readiness through Learning Organization

Social support positively contributes to students' work readiness through learning organizations. This support encourages active engagement in collaborative learning, increases self-confidence, and develops professional skills. This finding is consistent with Chen et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of learning organizations in maximizing the benefits of social support.

11. Internship Experience Strategy, Soft Skills, and Social Support in Improving Student Work Readiness through Learning Organizations

The results of the study show that internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support simultaneously increase students' work readiness through *learning organizations*. *Learning organization* functions as an intervening variable that integrates the three factors into a complete professional competency, in accordance with the concepts of Senge (2018) and Watkins & Marsick (2020), which emphasize the importance of collaborative and reflective learning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, internship experience, *soft skills*, and social support have a positive and significant influence on students' work readiness, both directly and through *learning organizations*. Internship experiences help students understand the world of work and apply theory to professional practice. Social support strengthens students' motivation, self-confidence, and engagement. *Learning organizations* are effective in transforming experience, *soft skills*, and social support into real-world work readiness. It is recommended that universities improve the quality of internship programs, integrate *soft skills development* into the curriculum, and create a collaborative and supportive academic environment. Students are encouraged to be proactive in utilizing learning experiences, developing interpersonal skills, and building professional networks. Future research can explore various internship formats, soft skills development strategies, and the most effective types of social support.

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