# EXPLORING FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT STUDENTS' WORK READINESS

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**Abstract**: Work readiness can be thought of as the extent to which individuals have the attitudes and skills needed to be successful in their job. This study aims to explore the factors that can influence students' work readiness. Data collected from 64 Bidikmisi scholarship recipients were analyzed using factor analysis. The results confirmed that the five proposed dimensions were reduced to two factors. The first factor consists of three dimensions namely maturity level, mental and emotional state, and self-development efforts. The second factor consists of two dimensions namely previous experience and intelligence level. Implications of the findings are discussed and future research opportunities are suggested.

**Keywords**: work readiness, students' work readiness, questionnaire, factor analysis

**Abstrak**: Kesiapan kerja dapat dianggap sebagai sejauh mana individu memiliki sikap dan keterampilan yang dibutuhkan untuk menjadi sukses dalam pekerjaan mereka. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengekplorasi faktor-faktor yang dapat mempengaruhi kesiapan kerja mahasiswa. Data yang dikumpulkan dari 64 mahasiswa penerima beasiswa Bidikmisi dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis faktor. Hasilnya menegaskan lima dimensi yang diajukan direduksi menjadi dua faktor. Faktor pertama terdiri dari tiga dimensi yaitu tingkat kedewasaan, kondisi mental dan emosional, dan upaya pengembangan diri. Faktor kedua terdiri dari dua dimensi yaitu pengalaman sebelumnya dan tingkat kecerdasan. Implikasi dari temuan didiskusikan dan peluang penelitian masa depan disarankan.

**Kata kunci**: kesiapan kerja, kesiapan kerja mahasiswa, kuesioner, analisis faktor

Knowing a student's work readiness is important for universities because it helps them to determine if a student is ready to handle the academic and workplace demands of university-level courses. Work readiness measures a student's ability to apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the workplace (Sukawati et al., 2020; Sultoni, Gunawan, & Rosalinda, 2018). It includes things like problem-solving, communication skills, critical thinking, and self-management (Sumarsono et al., 2019; Wardani & Gunawan, 2023). By assessing a student's work readiness, universities can identify their strengths and weaknesses and help them develop the skills they need to be successful in the workplace. Additionally, universities can use this information to create tailored mentorship programs and career development initiatives that help students prepare for their future (Apriani et al., 2020; Prastiawan et al., 2019, 2020).

Work readiness is a critical skill for students to develop as they prepare to transition from the academic world to the professional world. Work readiness involves the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed in the workplace. It includes understanding the expectations of the job, developing professional skills such as communication, problem-solving, and

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interpersonal skills, and the ability to apply these skills in a variety of settings (Salamah et al., 2020; Wiyono, Kusumaningrum, Gunawan, et al., 2019). Work readiness is essential for students as they prepare to enter the workplace (Kusumaningrum et al., 2016; Sultoni et al., 2022), and it is essential for employers to ensure that their employees are adequately trained and prepared to meet the demands of the job (Sultoni et al., 2021; Wardani et al., 2020). With a strong foundation in work readiness, students can be more successful in their future endeavors and more prepared to take on the challenges of the workplace.

The study results on work readiness for students indicate that students, regardless of their major, are not adequately prepared for the workplace. The findings suggest that universities need to provide more training and resources to ensure that students have the necessary skills to be successful in the workplace. Additionally, employers need to provide more resources to help students transition from academic to professional life (Hariyati, Tarma, et al., 2021; Prabawati et al., 2023; Ubaidillah et al., 2020). The results of this study indicate that universities and employers should work together to develop programs that teach students the skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

Instrument validation is an important process for accurately assessing if an instrument is suitable for measuring work readiness in students. Validation is necessary to ensure that the instrument is reliable and valid; that is, the scale is appropriate for the intended purpose and accurately measures what it is designed to measure (Benty, Gunawan, et al., 2020; Roesminingsih et al., 2021; Sobri et al., 2019). Without instrument validation, there is a risk of measuring the wrong skills or knowledge, or of providing inaccurate results. Instrument validation also helps make sure that the instrument is fair, unbiased, and applicable to all students regardless of background or other factors (Gunawan et al., 2019; Nurabadi et al., 2022). In addition, instrument validation helps to ensure that the instrument is valid across different contexts, settings, and populations (Nurabadi et al., 2019; Setya et al., 2020). Ultimately, instrument validation is essential for providing meaningful and accurate results that can be used to inform decision making related to students' work readiness.

Hence, this study explores the factors of student work readiness with the aim to be used as a reference in measuring student work readiness. In this study, we define student work readiness as the ability of students to adjust to the work environment and be more productive in doing the tasks assigned. This is an important skill for students in preparation for entry into the workforce. Students' work readiness is manifested in five dimensions: previous experience, maturity level, mental and emotional state, intelligence level, and self-development efforts.

## METHODS

### Participants

The study participants were 64 Bidikmisi scholarship students, class of 2018, Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia. Data were collected in conjunction with a student leadership training program. In total, 90 questionnaires were distributed, and 64 valid copies were returned with a response rate of 71.11%. Specifically, the gender ratio of students was 34.37% male (22) and 65.63% female (42). They were 20.45 years old on average.

## Instruments

We developed 21 items based on the five dimensions we proposed to measure students' work readiness (see Table 2). Previous experience (PE) refers to the experience gained by students before getting their current job. Maturity level (ML) refers to a structured level that describes how well individuals behave in a way that reliably and sustainably produces the required outcomes. Mental and emotional state (MES) refers to the individual's effort and ability to adjust to the environment and experiences. Intelligence level (IL) refers to an individual's ability to learn from experience and attempt to solve problems by using effective knowledge to adapt to new environments or conditions. Self-development efforts (SDE) refers to an individual's efforts in fulfilling the need for self-actualization. Participants were asked to rate each item on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

## Analysis

First, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. In addition, we calculated the level of each item based on the mean and then compared it with the total mean and categorized the results into two: high (H) if the item mean is greater than the total mean and low (L) if the item mean is less than the total mean. Second, for factor analysis we refer to the six steps proposed by Gunawan (2016): KMO and bartlett's test, anti-image matrices, extraction values from the communalities output, initial eigenvalues and extraction sums of squared loadings, component matrix values, and rotated component matrix. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software.

# RESULTS

## Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical analysis of each dimension of the student work readiness construct. As can be seen, MES had the highest mean (M = 3.55, SD = .31), followed by SDE (M = 3.46, SD= .40), PE (M = 3.44, SD = .44), ML (M = 3.40, SD = .27), and IL (M = 3.25, SD = .32). Moreover, there are three dimensions that have positive skewness scores (ML = .021, IL = .441, SDE = .005), which means that the distribution of the three dimensions is skewed right and the data tends to cluster on the left side of the distribution. While the other two dimensions have negative scores (PE = -.466, MES = -.227), which indicates that the distribution of the two dimensions is left-skewed and the data tends to cluster to the right of the distribution. Based on the kurtosis score, only one dimension has a positive score (PE = .305), which indicates that the distribution of these dimensions is relatively spiky. While the other four dimensions have positive scores (ML = -.587, MES = -1.032, IL = -.580, SDE = -1.337), which indicates that the distribution of the four dimensions is relatively flat.

Moreover, Table 2 presents a descriptive analysis of each item of the student work readiness construct. Then, we classified each item based on the mean of each item versus the mean of all items. As can be seen, there are 11 items (52.38%) in the high category (H) and 10 items (47.62%) in the low category (L). This indicates that items in the high category are factors that need to be maintained, while items in the low category are factors that need to be improved.

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Table 1 Descriptive analysis of each dimension

| | PE | ML | MES | IL | SDE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | 3.44 | 3.40 | 3.55 | 3.25 | 3.46 |
| SD | .44 | .27 | .31 | .32 | .40 |
| Skewness | -.466 | .021 | -.227 | .441 | .005 |
| Kurtosis | .305 | -.587 | -1.032 | -.580 | -1.337 |

Table 2 Descriptive analysis of each item

| Dimensions/Item | | M | SD | Note |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Previous experience | | | | |
| 1 | It is my conviction that enrolling in a higher education will facilitate the process of securing gainful employment | 3.33 | .56 | L |
| 2 | I am confident that the proficiencies I have obtained will facilitate my task execution | 3.55 | .53 | H |
| Maturity level | | | | |
| 3 | When making a career decision, I factor in my aptitudes and passions | 3.42 | .53 | H |
| 4 | I consider the opinions of others as a source of guidance for my personal development | 3.61 | .49 | H |
| 5 | I am attracted to positions that necessitate a high degree of precision and focus | 3.09 | .50 | L |
| 6 | Focusing one's attention is essential for producing successful results | 3.41 | .50 | L |
| 7 | I am appreciative when I am reminded of errors, I have made in my work | 3.59 | .50 | H |
| 8 | I endeavor to maintain composure when interacting with colleagues that provoke my ire | 3.25 | .47 | L |
| Mental and emotional state | | | | |
| 9 | I demonstrate deference towards others in order to facilitate their adjustment to a new environment | 3.50 | .50 | H |
| 10 | I am capable of quickly assimilating to the customs and regulations prevailing in my new surroundings | 3.25 | .53 | L |
| 11 | I accept accountability for my actions | 3.69 | .47 | H |
| 12 | I will revise my work in the event of any errors | 3.63 | .52 | H |
| 13 | It is essential for me to adhere to deadlines for the completion of my tasks | 3.69 | .47 | H |
| Intelligence level | | | | |
| 14 | I continually peruse literature pertinent to my area of specialization | 3.03 | .50 | L |
| 15 | I consistently monitor progress in my area of expertise by utilizing a variety of sources of information | 3.22 | .49 | L |
| 16 | I am prepared to take on assignments both on-campus and off-campus with the resources available at the educational institution | 3.23 | .58 | L |
| 17 | My acquired competencies facilitate my ability to adapt to professional circumstances | 3.50 | .50 | H |
| Self-development efforts | | | | |
| 18 | I strive to achieve excellence in collaborative tasks | 3.50 | .53 | H |
| 19 | I am delighted to be engaging in instruction that is pertinent to my area of specialization | 3.39 | .55 | L |
| 20 | In order to achieve maximum efficiency, I strive to enhance my skills and understanding | 3.55 | .50 | H |
| 21 | I endeavor to expand my cognizance beyond the classroom setting through perusing literature | 3.41 | .50 | L |

| Dimensions/Item | M | SD | Note |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 3.42 | | |

## Factor analysis

The first stage for factor analysis, we tested the feasibility of students' work readiness constructs using KMO and Bartlett's Test to determine whether the data can be further analyzed by factor analysis (Table 3). The results confirmed the KMO value was .696 > .50 and the Bartlett's Test value was .000 < .05. Thus, our data is eligible to proceed with factor analysis.

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .696 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 69.105 |
| | df | 10 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

In the second stage, to determine which dimensions should be used in factor analysis, we tested the data with Anti-Image Matrices values (Table 4). The results of the Anti-Image Correlation analysis confirmed the Measures of Sampling Adequacy values of the five dimensions of work readiness > .50 (PE = .657, ML = .672, MES = .664, IL = .724, SDE = .744). Thus, the five dimensions are suitable for factor analysis.

Table 4 Anti-image Matrices

| | | PE | ML | MES | IL | SDE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anti-image Covariance | PE | .934 | -.027 | .065 | -.149 | -.051 |
| | ML | -.027 | .544 | -.306 | -.053 | -.139 |
| | MES | .065 | -.306 | .588 | -.039 | -.073 |
| | IL | -.149 | -.053 | -.039 | .708 | -.259 |
| | SDE | -.051 | -.139 | -.073 | -.259 | .641 |
| Anti-image Correlation | PE | .657[a] | -.038 | .088 | -.183 | -.066 |
| | ML | -.038 | .672[a] | -.541 | -.086 | -.236 |
| | MES | .088 | -.541 | .664[a] | -.060 | -.119 |
| | IL | -.183 | -.086 | -.060 | .724[a] | -.384 |
| | SDE | -.066 | -.236 | -.119 | -.384 | .744[a] |

Note: [a]. Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA)

Then, the third stage, to test the feasibility of the dimensions whether they are able to explain the construct or not, we tested the data with the extraction value from the communalities output (Table 5). The result confirms the extraction value of the five dimensions > .50 (PE = .763, ML = .729, MES = .730, IL = .599, SDE = .616). Thus, all five dimensions can explain the factors.

Table 5 Communalities

| | Initial | Extraction |
|---|---|---|
| PE | 1.000 | .763 |
| ML | 1.000 | .729 |
| MES | 1.000 | .730 |
| IL | 1.000 | .599 |
| SDE | 1.000 | .616 |

The fourth stage, to explain the variance in the construct of student work readiness, we use the reference of the initial eigenvalues and extraction sums of squared loadings (Table 6). The extraction of sums of squared loadings reveals the number of factors that can be generated from the output data, with two variations of factors

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observed: 2.356 and 1.082. The requirement to become a factor, the initial eigenvalue must be greater than 1. The findings are in agreement that two constructs can be derived from the five dimensions examined. The initial eigenvalue of component 1, denoted as factor 1, is 2.356 and is able to account for 47.118% of the variation. The initial eigenvalue for the second component was 1.082, which was then transformed into factor 2 and explained 21.633% of the total variance in the data. Thus, cumulatively, the two components are able to explain 68.751% of the variation.

Moreover, the total value of components 3, 4, and 5 is not calculated because the initial eigenvalue of the three components is < 1, meaning that the three components do not become factors. Figure 1 Scree Plot also confirms the number of factors formed. The results confirm that there are two factors whose component point values have an eigenvalue > 1, meaning that two factors can be formed.

Table 6 Total Variance Explained

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 2.356 | 47.118 | 47.118 | 2.356 | 47.118 | 47.118 |
| 2 | 1.082 | 21.633 | 68.751 | 1.082 | 21.633 | 68.751 |
| 3 | .720 | 14.405 | 83.157 | | | |
| 4 | .480 | 9.597 | 92.754 | | | |
| 5 | .362 | 7.246 | 100.000 | | | |

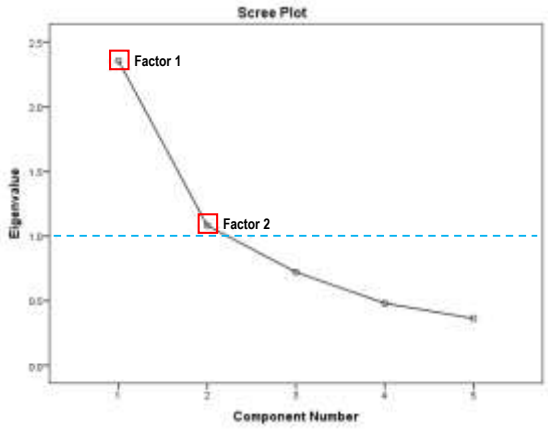

Figure 1 Scree Plot

Then, the fifth stage, to find out the correlation coefficient of each dimension with the factor to be formed, we refer to the component matrix value (Table 7). As can be seen, PE has a positive correlation with component 1 (R = .273) and component 2 (R = .830); ML has a positive correlation with component 1 (R = .802) and a negative correlation with component 2 (R = -.294); MES has a positive correlation with component 1 (R = .744) and negatively correlated with component 2 (R = -.420); IL had positive correlations with component 1 (R = .694) and component 2 (R = .344); and SDE had positive correlations with component 1 (R = .777) and component 2 (R = .107).

Table 7 Component Matrix

| | Component | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| PE | .273 | .830 |
| ML | .802 | -.294 |
| MES | .744 | -.420 |
| IL | .694 | .344 |
| SDE | .777 | .107 |

In the sixth stage, to confirm which factor group each dimension belongs to, we refer to the largest correlation value between the dimension and the formed factor (component) (Table 8). The results confirmed that factor group 1 consists of three dimensions, namely ML (R =

.851), MES (R = .852), and SDE (R = .660), while factor group 2 consists of two dimensions, namely PE (R = .868) and IL (R = .604). Finally, to ensure that the two factors are feasible to summarize the five dimensions analyzed, we refer to the correlation of the output component transformation matrix (Table 9). The results confirm that the correlations of components 1 and 2 are > .5 (component 1 = .907, component 2 = .907), which indicates that the two factors formed can be concluded to be suitable for summarizing the five dimensions analyzed.

Table 8 Rotated Component Matrix

| | Component | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 |
| PE | -.102 | .868 |
| ML | .851 | .071 |
| MES | .852 | -.068 |
| IL | .484 | .604 |
| SDE | .660 | .424 |

Table 9 Component Transformation Matrix

| Component | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | .907 | .421 |
| 2 | -.421 | .907 |

## DISCUSSION

Our study found that the five dimensions of the college students' work readiness construct empirically formed two significant factors. The first factor consists of three dimensions, namely maturity level, mental and emotional state, and self-development efforts. The second factor consists of two dimensions, namely previous experience and intelligence level. This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the factors that shape students' work readiness (Sultoni et al., 2021, 2022; Sultoni, Gunawan, & Rosalinda, 2018).

Prior experience, such as college education, can facilitate job acquisition and the application of acquired knowledge and skills to complete work tasks (Adha et al., 2020; Sultoni, Gunawan, & Pratiwi, 2018). Many employers view internships as a prerequisite for being hired and they can give students a chance to demonstrate their project management skills and proficiency in the subject area. Furthermore, gaining internship experience is of paramount importance to begin a career, offering the individual the opportunity to learn practical skills that may not have been taught in school, thus preparing them for the realities of the working environment.

Maturity level is a factor which considers an individual's skills and utilizes the opinions of others to facilitate personal development when selecting a profession. Students who work while studying are often indicative of a higher degree of maturity and responsibility (Bafadal et al., 2020; Hardika et al., 2018). They have developed the ability to solve challenges and have accepted the input of others in their self-improvement journey (Hariyati et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2020). However, engaging in both college and employment simultaneously should not be used as justification for failing to meet job requirements, but instead should be seen as an opportunity for the individual to display a high level of responsibility and professionalism, demonstrating their career maturity. Sumarsono et al. (2021) and Hidayah et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of having the stamina to juggle both responsibilities.

The capacity to regulate mental health and adapt to new situations is a key factor of the third dimension, concerning mental and emotional state. The mental state of an individual can be impacted by a wide array of factors, such as physical health conditions, feelings, interpersonal relationships, and the environment (Bafadal et al., 2021; Zulkarnain et al., 2020).

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Management is responsible for creating an environment that promotes the emotional wellbeing of employees, enabling them to work effectively in challenging situations. Furthermore, developing the capacity to manage stress and crises can assist individuals in preserving their mental health.

Acquiring intellectual intelligence involves activities such as reading literature related to one's field of expertise and staying up-to-date with developments in the area. It is composed of intellectual capacity, reasoning, and ratio. Goleman (2001) has identified academic achievements, like grades and graduation prospects, as indicators of intellectual intelligence. However, they do not necessarily predict a person's performance in the workplace or success in life. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, develops a person's personality and emotions and includes skills such as managing emotions, motivating oneself, being resilient in the face of challenges, controlling impulses, delaying gratification, regulating one's moods, and showing empathy and cooperation for others. While emotional intelligence can be cultivated, it takes time and patience to achieve optimal emotional intelligence (Ningsih et al., 2020; Zulkarnain & Sumarsono, 2018).

Engaging in self-development activities is essential to attaining work-readiness in adulthood. Such activities involve endeavouring to excel in group tasks and taking advantage of specialized instruction. A large proportion of people have the potential to develop their physical, intellectual, emotional, empathic, spiritual, moral, and emotional capabilities, which should be supported and, more significantly, encouraged (Bafadal et al., 2023; Sultoni, Gunawan, & Pratiwi, 2018). Individuals can increase their capacity to work and adjust more effectively to the work environment by engaging in self-improvement, which demonstrates the application of the educational process through changes in behavior that can ensure their preparedness for employment.

Finally, we believe that student work readiness is important academically because it helps to ensure that students are properly prepared to enter the workforce after they have completed their studies. It helps to bridge the gap between academic learning and the skills needed to be successful in the workplace. This includes understanding the expectations of employers, professional communication and networking skills, and developing the necessary problem-solving and critical thinking skills to succeed in the workplace. Work readiness also provides students with the confidence and motivation to pursue their goals, as well as the knowledge and experience to make informed decisions about their future. Hence, universities should develop character education programs through positive school culture (Jannah et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2022) to improve school quality and graduate quality to be relevant to current workforce needs (Arif et al., 2022; Budiarti & Pambudi, 2022; Gunawan et al., 2023). It is appropriate for universities to develop virtual learning systems (Haq et al., 2021, 2022; Hariyati, Wagino, et al., 2021; Karwanto et al., 2022; Supriyanto et al., 2022; Trihantoyo et al., 2022) to increase the scope of instructional programs to improve student competencies (Haq et al., 2022; Nurabadi et al., 2023; Roesminingsih & Winarko, 2019; Setiawan et al., 2023).

The theoretical implications of this research results on student work readiness are significant. The findings suggest that students need to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully transition from in-school learning to the working world. This

highlights the importance of providing students with the necessary resources, such as career exploration, internships, and job shadowing, to help them build the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the workplace (Amanah et al., 2022; Kusumaningrum et al., 2018; Wiyono, Kusumaningrum, Triwiyanto, et al., 2019). Additionally, the findings suggest that educators should focus more on teaching students' transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration that are essential for professional success. Finally, the research results emphasize the importance of creating a supportive school environment that encourages students to explore their interests and develop the confidence to pursue their career goals.

The practical implications of this research are that it can help employers and educators better understand the job readiness of students. This understanding can be used to improve the recruitment and hiring process, as well as to develop better job training and career pathways for students (Benty, Kusumaningrum, et al., 2020; Krisnafitriana et al., 2023). It can also inform decisions about how to better connect students with potential employers and career pathways. Finally, it can be used to improve the overall job readiness of students, which is beneficial for both employers and students.

## CONCLUSION

The current study confirms that the five dimensions we proposed are significant factors for measuring students' work readiness. Work readiness helps students to understand what is expected of them in the world of work. It helps them to understand the concepts, processes, and tasks involved in work. They can also learn how to manage their time and respect workers' rights. With a lot of preparation, students will be better prepared to face the work that is expected of them.

There are noteworthy limitations in the current study. Firstly, the study was conducted at university-type colleges which may not generalize the results to other types of education (i.e., institute, vocational, and diploma). Future researchers can take up this limitation by conducting the study in different educational institutions. Secondly, our sample was scholarship recipients, therefore, future researchers are advised to conduct a comparative study on students who do not receive scholarships, so that a wider range of conclusions can be drawn.

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