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The Influence of Student Participation in Career Planning Programs at Higher Education Institutions on Students' Work Readiness with Motivation as a Moderating Variable

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of student participation in university career planning programs on work readiness, while also analyzing the role of motivation as a moderating variable in this relationship.
Methodology: This research employs a quantitative approach involving 190 active university students who have participated in career planning programs. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using the SEM-PLS technique with SmartPLS 4 software to assess the direct and moderating effects among variables.
Results: The findings indicate that student participation in career planning programs has a positive and significant effect on work readiness. Motivation also demonstrates a direct and significant influence on work readiness; however, it does not moderate the relationship between student participation and work readiness.
Applications/Originality/Value: This study provides empirical evidence on how university career planning program participation contributes to improving students' work readiness. The results offer valuable insights for higher education institutions in designing, enhancing, and implementing more effective career development initiatives. Additionally, the study contributes originality by integrating motivation as a potential moderating variable within the context of career planning and work readiness.

1. Introduction Section

In today's highly competitive era, an individual's success is not only determined by academic abilities (hard skills) but also by soft skills, which are essential for individuals to manage their own emotions and build effective relationships with others (Dhea Novita et al., 2023). The current work environment is becoming increasingly competitive, driven by various factors such as economic conditions, population growth, limited job opportunities, technological advancement, and educational background. Higher education represents the final and optional stage of formal education, which plays a crucial role not only as an academic institution but also as a platform for students to plan their careers and prepare themselves to enter the workforce. Therefore, universities provide various career development programs to help students prepare for employment, such as career guidance, workshops or seminars, internships, and CV/interview training. However, not all students actively participate in these programs. Some students are highly engaged, while others are passive or even uninterested. The level of participation reflects the extent to which students are ready to face the professional world. Career planning plays an important role in achieving long-term success.

In this context, motivation is a key factor influencing how students respond to career planning programs. Students with high levels of motivation tend to be more productive and focused in preparing for their future careers (Hasani & Alam, 2025). Conversely, students with low motivation often fail to benefit optimally from the programs offered, even if they participate in them. However, few studies have examined the role of motivation as a moderating variable in the relationship between student participation in career planning programs and work readiness. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of student participation in university career planning programs on work readiness, with motivation as a moderating variable. The results of this study are expected to provide valuable information for solving related issues, serve as an evaluation reference for universities in developing strategies to improve students' work readiness, and maximize the effectiveness of career development programs for future implementation.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Model

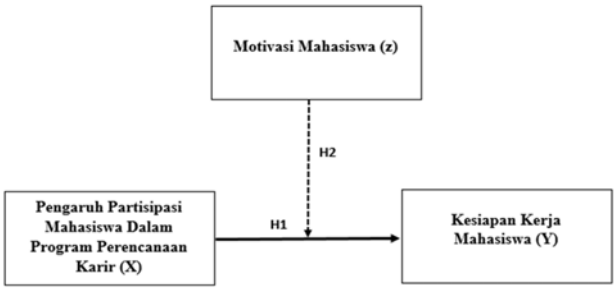

Fig. 1. Conceptual model

2.1 Student Participation

According to Junaidi and Susanti, the motivation to enter the workforce arises from the desire to participate in various activities, fulfill needs, achieve aspirations, gain recognition, and receive environmental support through engaging participation. The success of career planning programs in universities cannot be separated from the active participation of students. These programs aim to prepare students not only academically but also by equipping them with skills and knowledge relevant to the professional world. Therefore, universities organize several activities such as internship programs, career consultations, CV/interview training, and seminars or workshops to help students enhance their work readiness.

2.2 Work Readiness

The imbalance between the number of job seekers and available job opportunities has led to intense competition in the job market. Individuals with good work readiness have greater opportunities to obtain employment, while those lacking readiness may find it difficult to compete. Career interest is also a factor that influences a person's level of work readiness (Gosali et al., 2024). According to (Devita Putri, 2024), individuals with high work readiness also demonstrate strong self-efficacy. The aspects used to measure work readiness can determine the extent of an individual's competencies, as well as help identify areas for improvement before entering the workforce.

2.3 Motivation

According to (Hasani & Alam, 2025), motivation encourages students to be more active in developing the skills needed in the professional world through activities such as internships, training, and participation in student organizations. Motivation is an internal drive that influences individuals to fulfill their needs and direct their behavior toward achieving goals. (Pambajeng et al., 2024) explain that motivation, driven by positive attitudes and self-determination, guides students to build good work readiness. In this regard, students' career goals influence their participation in university-facilitated career planning programs.

2.4 Moderating Variable

In this study, motivation acts as a moderating variable that determines whether it strengthens or weakens the relationship between student participation in career planning programs and work readiness. It is assumed that highly motivated students tend to be more enthusiastic, active, and capable of maximizing the benefits of these programs. Conversely, students with low motivation may find it difficult to gain such benefits, leading to lower work readiness. Based on this explanation, motivation indirectly influences work readiness and moderates the strength of the relationship between student participation and career planning programs.

Hypothesis

Based on the literature review above, the author formulates the hypothesis as follows:

3.1 The Influence of Student Participation in Career Planning Programs at Universities on Student Work Readiness

Career planning is the process through which individuals set career goals and develop strategies to achieve them. At universities, career planning support programs such as internships, soft skill training, career consultations, seminars, or workshops serve as tools for student development, preparing them mentally for entering the workforce and enhancing interpersonal communication skills. Career planning programs also provide opportunities to develop soft skills, including professionalism, leadership, collaboration, public speaking, and ethical conduct, which have a positive and significant impact on work readiness (Dhea Novita et al., 2023). This finding aligns with Simanjuntak (2023), who reported that career planning positively and significantly influences work readiness.

H1: There is a positive effect of student participation in career planning programs on student work readiness.

3.2 The Influence of Student Motivation in Moderating the Effect of Participation in Career Planning Programs on Student Work Readiness

The internal awareness or drive that pushes individuals to achieve specific goals or targets. With a broad understanding, students can be motivated to actively participate in career planning programs and utilize the available resources. Increased student participation can also contribute to improving the quality of higher education. Participation in career planning programs significantly influences more structured and comprehensive career planning. Soft skills and work motivation affect work readiness (Hasani & Alam, 2025). Students who believe that participation in these programs enhances their desired work readiness are more likely to be motivated to participate actively.

H2: Student motivation moderates the effect of participation in career planning programs on student work readiness.

3. Metodology

This study is aquantitative study. Quantitative research can be defined asa form of research that uses numeric data collection and analytical techniquesto test hypotheses, draw conclusions, and understand the relationshipsbetween the variables being studied (Candra Susanto et al., 2024). In this study, sampling was conducted using non-probability purposive sampling techniques. The criteria for respondents inthis study were active students who had participated in career planning activitiesorganized by universities, and 190respondents were obtained. Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms to all active students at the university whohad participated in career planning programs. The data analysis technique usedwas Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with aPartialLeast Squares (PLS) approach.As explained by Hair etal. (2022), SEM, in the context of PartialLeast Squares (PLS), is anappropriate method for analyzing complex models involvingmany independent variables, dependent variables, and latent constructs. The reason for usingSEM-PLS are due to several advantages: (1) The ability to test complex causal relationshipsbetween variables, (2) The ability to analyze latent variables, (3)Ease in analyzing moderation and mediation effects, (4) The ability to handlenon-normally distributed data and overcome multicollinearity problems.

4. Result And Discusions Result

Data analysis in this study used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method with a Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach using SmartPLS 4.1 software.

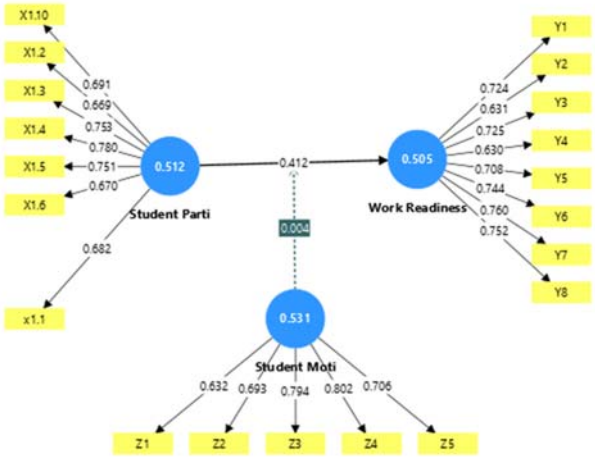

Fig. 2. Fit Outer Model

The figure above shows the level of convergent validity, with the outer loading values for Student Participation (X1), Student Motivation (Z), and Work Readiness (Y) all greater than 0.50, indicating that the indicators are valid. The AVE values obtained are: Student Participation 0.512; Student Motivation 0.531; and Work Readiness 0.505. Although the ideal standard is > 0.70, AVE values between 0.50–0.60 are still acceptable for exploratory research, meaning each indicator can represent its latent variable and meets the criteria for convergent validity.

Details of the Outer Model Magnitudes

An indicator is considered to have good convergent validity if the outer loading value is greater than 0.7. However, some studies suggest that values between 0.500 - 0.600 are sufficient to be considered valid for the indicators used. The following are the outer loading values for each indicator:

Tabel 1. Outer Loading

	Student Moti	Student Parti	Work Readiness	Student Moti x Student Parti
X1.10		0.691		
X1.2		0.669		
X1.3		0.753		
X1.4		0.780		
X1.5		0.751		
X1.6		0.670		
Y1			0.724	
Y2			0.631	
Y3			0.725	
Y4			0.630	
Y5			0.708	
Y6			0.744	
Y7			0.760	
Y8			0.752	
Z1	0.632			
Z2	0.693			
Z3	0.794			
Z4	0.802			
Z5	0.706			
x1.1		0.682		
Student Moti x Student Parti				1.000

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that each indicator of the research variables has an outer loading value greater than 0.500**.** The results in Table 1 show that none of the indicators have values below 0.500, indicating that all indicators are considered valid for use in the study and can be utilized for further analysis.

Reliability Test

Instrument reliability testing is conducted to determine the consistency of measurement results, even when performed at different locations, times, and populations, using Composite Reliability (CR) values, where CR values are a measure of internal consistency reliability, which, unlike Cronbach's alpha, does not assume equal indicator loadings. The CR value must be above 0.70 (in exploratory research, values between 0.60 and 0.70 are considered acceptable). The following are the Composite Reliability (CR) values for each variable:

Tabel 2. Composite Reliability

Variable	Composite reliability
Student Moti	0.777
Student Parti	0.849
Work Readiness	0.867

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all Composite Reliability (CR) values are greater than 0.700. This indicates that all variables are considered reliable.

Multicoliniearity Test

Multicollinearity testing was conducted to determine whether there was a correlation between independent variables. Referring to the explanation (Achmad, 2021), the appropriate limit for the variance inflation factor (VIF) value is less than 3 to 5,which indicates that the regression model is free from multicollinearity problems.

Tabel 3. Variance Inflation Factor

	VIF
Student Moti -> Work Readiness	1.638
Student Moti x Student Parti -> Work Readiness	1.259
Student Parti -> Work Readiness	1.627

Based on Table 4, the VIF value for the Student Motivation variable on Work Readiness is 1.638. The interaction value between Student Motivation × Student Participation on Work Readiness is 1.259. The VIF value for Student Participation in Work Readiness is 1.627. Each variable has a VIF value < 5, which means that there is no violation of the multicollinearity test and the analysis can continue. Research that experiences multicollinearity problems results in the research not describing the actual conditions that occur in the field (Assyifa et al., 2023).

These results reinforce the methodological validity of the study, as the absence of multicollinearity indicates that each variable makes a unique contribution to explaining Work Readiness. As explained (Azizah et al., 2020) multicollinearity can render the use of regression methods inappropriate because the regression estimates are unstable and the regression coefficient variables are very large. Therefore, this research model meets the basic requirements and is suitable for moving on to the next stage of analysis

Inner Model Analysis

The inner model test in this research analysis was obtained from the bootstrapping process in SmartPLS 4, with the following results:

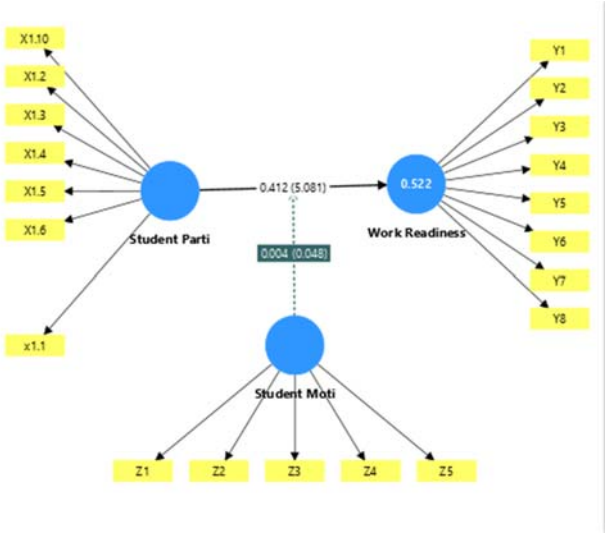

Fig. 3. Inner Model

Structural analysis identifies three main variables: student participation as the independent variable, student motivation as the moderating variable, and work readiness as the dependent variable. Each variable is measured through indicators related to student behavior, attitudes, and readiness levels. Bootstrapping results in SmartPLS 4.1 show that student participation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness, with a path coefficient of 0.412, a t-statistic of 5.081, and a p-value of 0.000—indicating that higher participation in career planning programs increases students' preparedness for entering the workforce. Meanwhile, student motivation does not moderate this relationship, as shown by a coefficient of 0.004, a t-statistic of 0.048, and a p-value of 0.962, meaning the effect of participation on readiness occurs directly and is not influenced by students' motivation levels.

The structural model also shows an R^2 value of 0.522 for work readiness, meaning that 52.2% of its variation is explained by student participation and motivation, while the remaining 47.8% is influenced by other factors such as internships, faculty support, or external environments. Overall, the findings confirm that student participation in career planning activities has a strong direct impact on work readiness. Although motivation does not act as a moderating factor, it remains an important internal element supporting student development. Thus, enhancing work readiness is most effective through active engagement in academic and non-academic activities such as seminars, organizations, internships, and skills training.

GoF *R2* (*R2* Godness of Fit)

GoF is the evaluation process used to assess how well the constructed model can explain the existing data. A GoF value of 0.1 indicates a small effect, 0.25 indicates a medium effect, and 0.36 indicates a strong effect.

Table 4. R-Square and R-Square Adjusted Values

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Work Readiness	0.522	0.515

Based on the data above, the R-Square value for the work readiness variable is 0.522 or 52.2%**,** indicating that the variables of student participation, student motivation, and their interaction (student participation × student motivation) can explain 52.2% of the variability in work readiness. This value falls into the moderate category, as it is within the range of 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that this research model has a fairly good ability to explain the work readiness variable.

Hypothesis Testing Direct

Effect Test

To test the hypotheses among the variables, the analysis in this study was conducted using the SmartPLS 4.1 software.

Table 5. Direct Effect

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Student Moti -> Work Readiness	0.402	0.401	0.073	5.495	0.000
Student Moti x Student Parti -> Work Readiness	0.004	0.057	0.082	0.048	0.962
Student Parti -> Work Readiness	0.412	0.417	0.081	5.081	0.000

Based on the table, the interpretation is as follows:

1. H1 tests whether student motivation has a positive and significant effecon work readiness. The table above shows a *t-statistic* value of 5.495, with an effect size of 0.402 and a *p-value* of 0.000. Since the *t-statistic* > 1.96 and the *p-value* < 0.05, it can be concluded that H1 is accepted.
2. H2 tests whether student motivation interacting with student participation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness. The table above shows a *t-statistic* value of 0.048 < 1.96 and a *p-value* of 0.962 > 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that H2 is rejected, as motivation does not moderate the relationship between student participation and work readiness.
3. H3 tests whether student participation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness. The table above shows a *t-statistic* value of 5.081, with an effect size of 0.412 and a *p-value* of 0.000. Since the *t-statistic* > 1.96 and the *p-value* < 0.05, it can be concluded that H3 is accepted.

5. Discussion

From the analysis of the research data above, it shows that:

5.1 The Effect of Motivation on Work Readiness. The results of the path coefficient test show that student motivation has an original sample value of 0.402, with a *t-statistic* value of 5.495 and a *p-value* of 0.000, indicating a positive and significant result. It can be concluded that the higher the level of motivation, the greater the students' readiness to face the world of work. This finding is consistent with the study by (Hasani & Alam, 2025), which found that motivation has a positive and significant influence on the level of work readiness.

5.2 The Effect of the Interaction Between Motivation and Student Participation on Work Readiness. The moderation test results show that the original sample value is 0.004, with a *t-statistic* of 0.048 and a *p-value* of 0.962. The conclusion obtained is that since the *t-statistic* < 1.96 and the *p-value* > 0.05, the relationship is not significant. This indicates that motivation does not moderate the relationship between participation in career planning programs and work readiness. This means that regardless of the level of motivation students have when participating in career planning programs, it does not significantly influence their work readiness. The impact or effect of participation on work readiness remains relatively the same. This finding shows that the motivation factor has not yet been able to strengthen or weaken the influence of participation on work readiness.

5.3 The Influence of Student Participation on Work Readiness. Student participation in career planning programs has an original sample value of 0.412, a *t-statistic* value of 5.081, and a *p-value* of 0.000, indicating that *t-statistic* > 1.96 and *p-value* < 0.05, which means the effect is positive and significant. This study shows that the more actively students participate in career planning programs, the higher their level of work readiness. University programs provide students with extensive experience and understanding of the professional world, enabling them to better prepare themselves before entering it. This finding is consistent with the research of (Dhea Novita et al., 2023), which showed that participation in career development programs has a positive and significant influence on students' work readiness, as active participation helps students build self-confidence, enhance interpersonal skills, and understand workplace expectations.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study showed that student participation in career planning programs has a positive and significant impact on their readiness for work. The more actively students participate in career planning programs, the higher their readiness to enter working life. The results of this study show that motivation does not act as a moderating variable, i.e., it does not strengthen or weaken the relationship between student participation in programs and their readiness for work. This study broadens our understanding of the factors that influence students' readiness for work, especially in the context of career development programs at Indonesian universities.

1. Suggestions for the University

This study found that student participation in career planning programs has a positive and significant impact on their willingness to work. The more actively students participate in career planning programs, the higher their willingness to work. Therefore, universities are advised to increase the effectiveness of career planning programs by encouraging student participation through more attractive, systematic, and accessible career development activities. In addition, motivation can influence the strength or direction of the relationship between participation in career planning programs and work readiness. Universities are advised to offer programs that increase student motivation, such as mentoring, coaching, and counseling services, to support work readiness. Regular evaluation is also necessary to tailor strategies and activity content to students' needs. This study expands the understanding of the factors that influence students' readiness to work, particularly in the context of career development programs at Indonesian universities.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that may provide opportunities for further research. Therefore, future researchers are advised to:

1. Use of mixed-method research combining questionnaires and interviews: This method allows researchers to understand the factors shaping students' readiness to enter the workforce in a more integrated way.
2. Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Career Development Programs in Higher Education: Focusing on universities that already have career development centers and those that are in the process of establishing them, with verification of research consistency using various analytical methods.
3. The research model is expanded to be more comprehensive by incorporating additional variables that could potentially influence employment readiness, such as internship experience, soft skills, faculty support, and students perceptions of the workplace.

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