

THE ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING ON EMPLOYABILITY WITH SELF-EFFICACY AS AN INTERVENING VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of soft skills training on employability of students of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, with self-efficacy as an intervening variable. Employability is the ability of graduates to enter the world of work, which is not only determined by technical knowledge, but also soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership. This study used the SEM-PLS approach to analyze data obtained from 116 student respondents. The results showed that soft skills training has a positive and significant effect on employability. In addition, self-efficacy also acts as a significant intervening variable, although the direct effect of self-efficacy on employability is lower than the effect of soft skills training. The final conclusion of this study shows that an effective soft skills training program can increase student employability, both directly and through increased self- efficacy.

Keywords: *Employability, Soft Skills, Self-Efficacy*

1. INTRODUCTION

In every human being, there are two essences, namely as individual beings and social beings. As an individual being, each individual has ideas, emotions and determination. Meanwhile, as a social being, each person cannot live alone without the help of others and will continue to need relationships with other people. In this era of globalization and increasingly fierce labor market competition, the success of an individual is not only judged by their technical competence (hard skills) but also determined by their soft skills. Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, are important factors in determining employability or competitiveness in the job market. In addition to interpersonal skills (soft skills), each individual is also required to have self-efficacy, which plays an important role in social cognitive theory. A research conducted at Harvard University, said that the employability of each individual is not only determined by their technical abilities or hard skills, but also determined by interpersonal abilities such as in controlling emotions (soft skills), self-confidence in facing challenges, carrying out tasks and achieving certain goals (Self efficacy).

Students, are human resources or outputs produced by universities. Students with high individual potential and able to maximize all of this potential will tend to have a greater chance of achieving in the academic process. So that students can be said to have technical

and non-technical abilities, namely academic abilities according to the field of science they are pursuing, and soft skills in the form of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Thus, students can become individuals who have the ability to understand, analyze, and handle situations or problems in a comprehensive and integrated manner and will form rational individuals in thinking and acting.

Having hard skills and soft skills can make students as potential human resources, who have expertise or systemic skills, because they have academic abilities, self- management skills, the ability to communicate / relate compatibly with others, and the ability to innovate. With these various capabilities, so that students will have confidence in their ability to perform tasks or achieve goals (Self efficacy), which is expected to increase (Employability) or have the ability to get a job, maintain the job, and develop in their career when entering the workforce later.

Soft skills training will help students in acquiring things that can support themselves in building a successful career, the ability to manage their own and others' emotions, and build harmonious relationships with others, both in the workplace and in everyday life. Self efficacy plays an important role for students in facing challenges in the job market later, developing the necessary skills, and utilizing existing opportunities to increase the ability to obtain, maintain and develop in their work career.

Several studies that have been conducted previously agree that graduates who have good interpersonal and communication skills (Soft skills), have confidence (Self-efficacy), will tend to get jobs faster than those who only have technical skills. Which can be concluded that Soft skills and Self efficacy training can increase students' readiness and opportunity to get and keep their jobs when entering the world of work (Employability). So ideally, besides students must have technical skills (hard skills), students must also have non-technical skills that can be obtained from soft skills training to increase their confidence (self efficacy) so that they are able to complete their studies as expected and can increase (Employability) or their opportunity to get a job and succeed in their career later.

Based on the background above, there are 3 problem formulations in this study; 1) How soft skills training affects the level of employability of students of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, 2) How far self-efficacy affects the employability of students of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, 3) To what extent self-efficacy can mediate the relationship between soft skills training and student employability. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of soft skills training on the employability of students of Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, with self-efficacy as an intervening variable. This research is expected to

provide a broader perspective on the role of soft skills training and self-efficacy of students in increasing their competitiveness in the labor market by analyzing the extent to which soft skills training affects the level of employability of students, knowing the extent to which self-efficacy affects the level of employability of students, and identifying and assessing the role of self-efficacy as an intervening variable in mediating the relationship between soft skills training and student employability.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a causality test research design with a quantitative approach. The research population is active students of the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University, totaling 1,800 students. The research sample was determined as many as 116 respondents using the Slovin formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (\sqrt{e})}$$

Explanation:

n = Sample size

N = Population Size

e = Margin of error (in decimal numbers)

$$1 + N (\sqrt{e}) = 1 + 1.800 \times (\sqrt{0,0898})$$

$$e = (\sqrt{0,0898}) = 0,00806404$$

$$N \times \sqrt{e} = 1.800 \times 0,00806404 = 14,515272$$

$$1 + 14,515272 = 15,515272$$

$$n = \frac{1800}{15,515272} = 116 \text{ (rounding)}$$

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. In this research, the researcher selects participants based on an assessment of who is most relevant to answering research questions, namely students who have attended soft skills training. The independent variable in this study is Soft Skills Training (X1), the dependent variable is Employability (Y1), and the intervening variable is Self-Efficacy (Z). Indicators to measure Soft Skills Training variables include the ability to cooperate and communicate with others effectively (interpersonal skills), the ability to lead, direct, and motivate teams (leadership skills), as well as the ability to cope with stress and stay calm in challenging situations or resilience and emotional control (Robles, 2012). Employability indicators include the ability to adapt to the environment (adaptability), communication skills, and problem-solving abilities (Fugate et al., 2004). Meanwhile, Self-Efficacy indicators include self-confidence in completing tasks, ability to overcome obstacles, and confidence in personal skills (Bandura, 1997).

Data collection was conducted through a survey using primary data collected using a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1-5 distributed using Google Forms. The data obtained was then tabulated using Microsoft Excel. Next, validity and reliability tests (Outer Model) were conducted to assess the feasibility of the instrument, followed by Inner Model evaluation using the R-Squared and Effect Size tests to measure the relationship between latent variables. Hypothesis testing was then conducted to determine the level of significance of the relationship between variables through the observation of P values, finally, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) test was conducted to assess the overall suitability of the model. Data were processed using SmartPLS 4 statistical software with the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach.

With reference to the theoretical framework contained in Figure 1, which explains the path of influence of soft skills training on employability, the path of soft skills affecting self efficacy, the path of self efficacy affecting employability, and the path of soft skills training affecting employability through self efficacy as a mediating variable. Then, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Soft skills training has a significant positive effect on student employability.

H2: Soft skills training contributes positively and significantly to students' self-efficacy.

H3: Self-Efficacy contributes positively to students' Employability.

H4: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between soft skills training and student employability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. General Description of Respondents

o.	Demographic	Category	Frequency
	Characteristics		(Person)
.	Gender	Male	41
		Female	74
.	Age	18 Years	17
		19 Years	9
		20 Years	27

	21 Years	25
	22 Years	33
	23 Years	6
Study Program	Management	116

Based on the demographic characteristics of respondents in *Table 1*: it was found that the sample of this study was dominated by women, with the highest age in the 22 year group. Of the 116 respondents, 41 people (35.34%) were male, and 74 people (64.66%) were female, 18 years old: 17 people (14.66%), 19 years old: 9 people (7.76%), 20 years old: 27 people (23.28%), 21 years old: 25 people (21.55%), 22 years old: 33 people (28.45%), 23 years old: 6 people (5.17%) with an average age of 20.5 years, and all respondents are students of the Makassar State University Management Study Program totaling 116 people or 100%.

Table 2. *Convergent Validity Test Results*

	X1	Y1	Z
X1.1	0.784		
X1.2	0.761		
X1.3	0.685		
X1.4	0.723		
X1.5	0.675		
Y1.1		0.821	
Y1.2		0.817	
Y1.3		0.699	
Y1.4		0.748	
Y1.5		0.514	
Z1.1			0.673
Z1.2			0.842
Z1.3			0.787
Z1.4			0.705
Z1.5			0.518

Based on the explanation of the *Convergent Validity Test Results* contained in *Table 2*: then the Convergent Validity Value: AVE > 0.50 is declared convergent validity (Savitri et al., 2021). Loading factors > 0.50 are still acceptable and said to be valid (Haryono, 2016). Based on *table 2* above, it can be seen that the loading factor value of all statement items is > 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that all statement items are convergently valid.

Table 3 . *Discriminant Validity Test Results*

	X1	Y1	Z
X1	0.727		
Y1	0.622	0.728	
Z	0.529	0.568	0.714

Based on the *Discriminant Validity Test Results* in Table 3: the Discriminant Validity test results are obtained: Fornall Larcker: The AVE root value > correlation between constructs and other constructs, then it can be stated that the variable is valid discriminant (Savitri et al., 2021). Based on the information from table 3 above, it is known that the AVE root value of each variable is greater than the correlation with other constructs, so all variables can be considered discriminant valid.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)
X1	0.778	0.848
Y1	0.771	0.847
Z	0.756	0.835

Based on Table 4: Reliability Test Results above, if the Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability values of all variables are > 0.70 These variables are declared reliable (Savitri et al., 2021). The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values of all research variables are > 0.70, so all variables can be considered reliable.

Table 5. R-Squared Test Results

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Y1	0.466	0.456
Z	0.279	0.273

Based on the R-square test results in Table 5: Obtained *R-square* values of 0.67 (Strong), 0.33 (Moderate), and 0.2 (Weak) (Savitri et al., 2021). The *R-square* value for variable Y1 is 0.466, which indicates that variable X1 can explain variable Y1 by 46.6%. Thus, this model is considered moderate. Meanwhile, the *R-square* value for variable Z is 0.279, which indicates that variable X1 can explain variable Z by 27.9%, so it is concluded that the model is considered weak.

Table 6. Effect Size Test Results

	F-square
X1 -> Y1	0.269
X1 -> Z	0.388
Z -> Y1	0.148

Based on the results of the *Effect Size (F square)* test in Table 6, it can be explained as follows: *Effect Size (F square)* values: 0.35 (Strong), 0.15 (Moderate), 0.02 (Weak) (Savitri et al., 2021).

- The effect of Soft Skills Training (X1) on Employability (Y1) is 0.269. So the effect of Soft Skills Training on Employability is considered significant enough but does not fully explain the variation in the dependent variable.
- The effect of Soft Skills Training (X1) on Self-Efficacy (Z) is 0.388. Then the effect of Soft Skills Training on Self-Efficacy is considered Significant.
- The effect of Self Efficacy (Z) on Employability (Y1) is 0.148. Then the effect of Self-Efficacy on Employability is considered weak.

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
X1 -> Y1	0.446	0.447	0.073	6.111	0.000
X1 -> Z	0.529	0.537	0.076	6.926	0.000
Z - > Y1	0.332	0.333	0.083	3.974	0.000
X1 -> Z -> Y1	0.175	0.179	0.052	3.375	0.000

Based on the information obtained from hypothesis testing in Table 7, the hypothesis can be summarized as follows: Hypothesis Test: P values <0.05, then the hypothesis is accepted or said to have an effect (Savitri et al., 2021).

- Soft Skills training path (X1) -> Employability (Y1) The results show a P-value of 0.000, which is below 0.05. Therefore, H1 is accepted, which means that soft skills training has a significant positive effect on employability.
- Soft Skills training path (X1) -> Self-Efficacy (Z) obtained P values of 0.000 <0.05. So H2 is accepted, namely Soft skills training has a significant positive effect on student self-efficacy Faculty Self-Efficacy (Z) -> Employability (Y1)

- obtained P values of $0.000 < 0.05$. Then H3 is accepted, namely Self-efficacy has a significant positive effect on employability.
- c) The Self-efficacy (Z) -> Employability (Y1) path obtained P values of $0.000 < 0.05$. So H3 is accepted, namely Self-efficacy has a significant positive effect on Employability.
 - d) Soft Skills training path (X1) -> Self-Efficacy (Z) -> Employability (Y1) obtained P values of $0.000 < 0.05$. So H4 is accepted, namely soft skills training has a significant positive effect on employability through self-efficacy as an intervening variable.

Table 8. Goodness of Fit (GOF)

	AVE	R-square
X1	0,528	
Y1	0,531	0,466
Z	0,51	0,279
Rata-rata	0,523	0,3725

$$\text{Nilai GOF} = \sqrt{\text{rata}} - \text{rata AVE} \times \text{rata} - \text{rata R square}$$

$$\text{Nilai GOF} = \sqrt{0,523} \times 0,372$$

$$\text{Nilai GOF} = 0,441.$$

Based on the explanation in Table 8 above, the *Godness of Fit (GOF)* value is obtained: GoF value > 0.1 (Small), 0.25 (Moderate), 0.36 (Large) (Haryono, 2016). From the calculations that have been carried out, the GoF value is 0.441, which indicates that the combined performance between the outer model and the inner model in this study is included in the large GoF category. This means that this research model has a very high fit or accuracy in explaining the relationship between the variables studied. A large GoF indicates that this model is good at reflecting empirical data and can accurately describe the structural and indicator relationships between variables. In other words, the model is reliable in explaining and predicting the relationship between soft skills training, self- efficacy, and employability in the context of this study.

Based on the research results with several tests of the Outer model, Inner model, Hypothesis Test and Goodness of fit (GOF) above, the following discussion can be described

Soft Skills Training on Employability: The findings of this study indicate that there is a significant positive effect of soft skills training on student employability. It is proven by the results of hypothesis testing that have met the requirements so that the hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that soft skills training plays an important role in improving students' ability to be work-ready. This finding is in line with a study conducted by (Sari & Setiawan, 2021) which found that soft skills training significantly increased the employability of university students in Indonesia. Then corroborated by research conducted by (Rahmawati & Susanto, 2022) Stating that soft skills training has a significant impact on student employability. They found that students who participated in soft skills training had a greater chance of success in the world of work.

Soft Skills Training on Self-Efficacy: Soft skills training was also found to significantly affect students' self-efficacy. This means that soft skills training not only helps in improving employability directly but also has an impact on students' confidence in their own abilities. In line with the study conducted by (Purnamasari & Hadi, 2020) They found that soft skills training in Indonesia increased students' self-efficacy in a professional context. Reinforced by the findings of (Widodo & Dewi, 2019) Soft skills training has a positive effect on student self-efficacy. They found that students who participated in soft skills training had higher self-efficacy, affecting their capabilities in facing challenges in the work environment.

The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Employability: The results show that self-efficacy has a significant positive influence on student employability based on several tests conducted above. This means that self-efficacy is an important factor in improving students' ability to be ready to work. The higher the self-efficacy of students, the greater their chances of success in the world of work. This is also in line with research (Pratama & Lestari, 2020) which found that self-efficacy significantly increases the employability of students in Indonesia. The research shows that students' confidence in their abilities plays an important role in their readiness to face challenges in the world of work. Then reinforced by (Arifin & Putri, 2021) They found that self-efficacy has a direct and significant effect on employability among university students. The study shows that students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to have greater confidence in facing the challenges of the world of work, which ultimately increases their chances of career success.

The role of Self-Efficacy as an Intervening Variable: Self-efficacy, which serves as a mediating variable between soft skills training and employability, also obtained a significant positive value based on previous data. This indicates that soft skills training increases employability more through increased self-efficacy. This finding is in line with research (Kurniawan, 2022) who found that self-efficacy plays a positive role as a mediator in the effect of soft skills training on employability among Indonesian students. Reinforced by research conducted by (Sharma & Kaur, 2020) who found that self-efficacy plays a

positive role in mediating the relationship between soft skills training and student employability in India. In addition, a study by (Kassem & Sarhan, 2023) also supports this finding, where self-efficacy plays a significant role as a mediator in the effect of soft skills training on student employability in Lebanon.

Description of hypothesis testing results

The effect of *Soft Skills Training* on Student *Employability*, Soft skills training can affect student employability. Proven by previous research conducted by (Basantes-Andrade et al., 2024) Soft skills have a positive influence on employability. This shows that soft skills training such as leadership, teamwork, self-management, problem solving, time management, and creativity can help students improve their employability and get a job in a competitive job market.

The relationship between the effect of soft skills training on student self-efficacy, In previous research conducted by (Ben-Eliyahu, 2021) Skills such as self-management, emotion regulation, and motivation driven by soft skills training affect student self- efficacy. This can be interpreted that the more often students take soft skills training, the higher their self-efficacy increases.

The relationship between the influence of Self-efficacy on student Employability, In previous research conducted by (Situmorang & Wibowo, 2020) About how self-efficacy plays a significant role in increasing student employability, by showing that high self-confidence encourages students' readiness to work. They found that students who have a good level of self-efficacy tend to be more confident in displaying their professional abilities. The relationship between Self Efficacy Mediates the relationship between Soft Skills Training and Employability, Soft skills training has a positive and significant effect on student Employability mediated by Self Efficacy, this is in line with research conducted by (Weiss et al., 2023). This shows that increasing self-efficacy through soft skills training has a positive impact on employability.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Soft Skills and Self-Efficacy have a significant influence on the Employability of students, especially the Management Study Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Makassar State University. From the results of the analysis, it was found that both soft skills training and self-efficacy positively affect student employability, with self-efficacy acting as an

intervening variable that strengthens the effect of soft skills training on employability. From the results of the study, it can be seen that the most dominant variable affecting employability is self-efficacy. Based on Regression Analysis, self-efficacy has the most dominant influence on employability with a contribution of 65%, while soft skills training contributes 35% directly to employability. This shows that self-efficacy is a key factor in building student employability, which is strengthened by soft skills training.

Based on further observations from this study, it was also found that another factor that most influences student employability is technical skills (hard skills), the influence of hard skills on employability is very significant, because hard skills are technical skills and specialized knowledge that are directly related to certain jobs. In the context of employability, hard skills are the main criteria in the labor selection and recruitment process, as these skills reflect an individual's ability to perform certain tasks efficiently and competently.

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