In Search

e-ISSN: 2580-3239
p-ISSN: 2085-7993
Volume 25 No. 1 April 2026

The Effect of Psychological Capital on Work Readiness of Final-Year Students in Bandung City

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Accepted:	Published:
13 April 2026	28 April 2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Psychological Capital (Psycap) on work readiness in final-year university students in Bandung City. This study used a quantitative approach involving 220 final-year university students in Bandung City. Sampling was conducted using a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, with the following criteria: final-year undergraduate students, aged 18–25, and with no prior work experience. Data were collected via a Google Form to provide easy access for respondents. The variables were measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) for Psycap and the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) for work readiness. Both instruments demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.904 and 0.889, respectively. Data analysis was performed using simple linear regression with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The results show that Psycap has a positive and significant influence on work readiness. The contribution of Psycap to work readiness is 50.6%, while the remaining percentage is influenced by other factors. This finding implies that improving Psycap (which includes self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) can effectively enhance students' work readiness. The practical implication of this study is the need for educational institutions to develop psychological intervention programs to prepare students holistically, not just academically, before they enter the workforce.

Keywords: psychological capital, work readiness, final year student

1 INTRODUCTION

Major changes in the industrial world due to digitalization and globalization have shifted the demands on college graduates, from a focus solely on technical skills to a combination of hard skills and psychological competencies such as adaptability, resilience, and self-confidence [1]. Final-year students, as individuals entering emerging adulthood, are required to be fully prepared for the world of work [2]. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the unemployment rate in Indonesia reached 5.45%, or 7.9 million people, in February 2023. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for West Java Province shows that the unemployment rate reached 6.36% in August 2024, making it one of the top 10 provinces with the highest unemployment rates in Indonesia. In 2024, it was recorded that approximately 1.01 million undergraduate graduates in Indonesia were unemployed, making this group one of the largest contributors to the national unemployment rate, which reached 7.28 million [3]. This situation indicates that many undergraduate graduates are not immediately absorbed into the workforce, not due to a lack of jobs, but rather due to a gap between the skills developed in higher education and industry needs. Previous research has found that the higher education curriculum in Indonesia tends to be academically oriented, lacks practical training, and does not systematically develop students' work readiness, both technically and psychologically [4]. A significant mismatch between the workplace's expectations regarding soft skills and the competencies possessed by graduates [1].

Academically, final-year students should have mastered the basic competencies taught in the college curriculum, but the biggest challenge they face is how to apply this knowledge in a real-world work environment. On the other hand, from a career perspective, students at this stage also begin to explore job opportunities, build professional networks, and develop mental and psychological readiness to enter the increasingly competitive world of work [5]. Unfortunately, many graduates still experience a gap between their skills and the demands of the workplace, making job readiness a crucial factor in determining the success of this transition [6].

The work readiness of final-year students is a crucial aspect determining their success in entering the professional world. Several student interviews revealed that differences in work readiness are not only related to mastery of technical skills but also psychological factors such as self-confidence, overcoming fear, the ability to cope with pressure, communication skills, and adapting to change or new environments. In this regard, psychological capital (Psycap) emerges as a potential factor that can influence student work readiness.

Psychological capital, or Psycap, is a construct in positive psychology that describes an individual's positive psychological state and can be developed. This is reflected in four main dimensions of psychological capital: (1) self-efficacy, which is the confidence to undertake and exert the effort necessary to complete challenging tasks; (2) optimism, which involves positive attributions about current and future success; (3) hope, which is the determination to achieve goals and, if necessary, the ability to create and direct steps toward success; and (4) resilience, which is the ability to endure and bounce back from problems and/or difficulties [7].

Self-efficacy is demonstrated through self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance in completing tasks, which supports the development of personal characteristics and work competence within an individual. Furthermore, optimism contributes to improved communication skills and building positive work relationships, which is related to an individual's social intelligence. Resilience also enables students to adapt to the values and work culture within the organization, which is related to organizational acumen.

Personal characteristics, work competence, social intelligence, and organizational acumen are dimensions of work readiness. Work readiness encompasses all forms of individual attitudes and attributes that can prepare them for success in the workplace [6]. Work readiness into four dimensions. The first is personal characteristics, namely individual maturity consisting of self-resilience, self-direction, self-knowledge, and self-development. The second is organizational acumen, namely individual attitudes in organizational settings related to motivation to work together, maturity, organizational awareness, professionalism and work ethics, social responsibility, and work attitudes. The third is work competence, namely work motivation attitudes, problem solving (solutions), critical thinking, innovation or creative thinking. The last is social intelligence, an individual's ability to relate socially with the community in the environment in the form of teamwork, social skills, adaptability, and interpersonal skills [6].

Previous research has shown that high levels of PsyCap in final year students have a direct impact on their work readiness, particularly in terms of career risk-taking, adaptability to new environments, and resilience in the face of work pressure [8]. Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a potential factor that can influence the work readiness of final year students. Increasing this PsyCap dimension contributes to the development of psychological capacities needed to face challenges in the workplace, in addition to technical skills. Considering previous research, there has been no similar study. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of psychological capital on the work readiness of final year students in the city of Bandung.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Work Readiness

Work readiness is defined as an individual's ability to secure, maintain, and transition between jobs independently [9]. It encompasses the capacity to face workplace challenges through adaptability, continuous learning, social skills, and a strong work ethic [10]. Beyond just landing a job, it serves as a predictor for long-term performance, career advancement, and organizational success [6]. Work readiness consists of four key dimensions. Personal characteristics which includes self-resilience, self-direction, and maturity, which dictate how an individual carries themselves professionally. Organizational acumen, relates to professional attitudes within a corporate setting, including teamwork, ethics, social responsibility, and organizational awareness. Work competence is focuses on technical and cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation, to fulfill job-specific tasks. Social intelligence is Involves interpersonal skills, adaptability, and the ability to collaborate effectively within a team to achieve organizational goals [6].

2.2 Psychological Capital (PsyCap)

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a positive higher-order psychological construct characterized by an individual's positive state of development [7]. Unlike fixed personality traits, PsyCap is "state-like," meaning it is dynamic and open to development through specific interventions [11]. It serves as a synergistic motivational resource that enhances performance, resilience, and well-being across workplace, educational, and social contexts [12][13]. PsyCap consists of four core dimensions, first hope is a motivational state based on "agency" (the goal-directed energy) and "pathways" (the ability to plan alternative routes to overcome obstacles). Second, self-Efficacy which is drawing from Bandura's social cognitive theory, it is the confidence in one's ability to mobilize the motivation and cognitive resources needed to succeed at challenging tasks. Third, Eesilience is the capacity to "bounce back" or recover from adversity, failure, or even overwhelming positive change by utilizing personal and social assets. Last,

Optimism is a positive explanatory style that attributes success to internal, permanent, and pervasive causes, while viewing setbacks as external, temporary, and situation-specific [7].

3 RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted using quantitative methods, targeting final-year university students in Bandung. A non-probability sampling technique using purposive sampling was chosen to select respondents based on the researcher's stated aims and objectives. The sample characteristics included final-year undergraduate students aged 18-25 years, with no work experience. The subjects consisted of 220 final-year undergraduate students across Bandung.

Psychological capital was measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) and modified, with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0.753 [7] [14]. The Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) consists of 19 items, from which respondents could choose one of five response options arranged on a Likert scale ranging from (1) Very Disagree to (5) Very Agree. Work readiness was further measured using the Work Readiness Scale (WRS) and modified with a Cronbach's alpha reliability score of 0.829 [6]. The Work Readiness Scale (WRS) consists of 30 items. Respondents could choose one of four answer options arranged on a Likert scale. Data analysis techniques used included data transformation using the Method of Successive Interval (MSI) analysis using Microsoft Excel, normality testing, linearity testing, and hypothesis testing using simple linear regression analysis.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents in this study were 2020 final year students in Bandung City with the following descriptions:

Table 1. Description of Research Respondents

Category	N	%
Gender		
Female	85	38.6%
Male	135	61.4%
University		
State University	115	52.3%
Private University	105	47.7%
Major		
Science and Technology	66	30%
Social Science	154	70%
Total	220	100%

Next, a descriptive analysis test was conducted to determine the mean value for each variable group. The mean value was used to determine the categorization of each variable, with the aim of dividing respondents into groups based on the scores obtained. The categorization guidelines which defines low and high, with the condition that X ≥ the mean falls into the high category and X < the mean falls into the low category [15]. Therefore, with a mean value of 44.76 for the psychological capital variable and a mean value of 50.90 for the work readiness variable, the categorization results are as follows:

Table 2. Variabel Categorization

Variable	Low		High	
	N	%	N	%
Psychological Capital	171	77.7	49	22.3
Work Readiness	128	58.2	92	41.8

Then, normality and linearity tests were conducted before hypothesis testing. The normality test aims to detect the extent of possible deviations or irregularities [16]. The following are the results of the normality test:

Table 3. Normality

Varible	Sig.	Interpretation
Psychological Capital	0.200	Data is normally distributed
Work Readiness		

Based on the calculation of the results of the normality test that has been carried out, the results obtained show that the two variables, namely Psychological Capital and Work Readiness, are normally distributed.

Table 4. Linearity Test

Varible	Sig.	Interpretation
Psychological Capital	0.003	Data is linearly related
Work Readiness		

Based on the calculation of the linearity test results, the results obtained showed that the linearity significance value was 0.003 (sig. < 0.05), which means that psychological capital has a linear relationship with work readiness.

Table 5. Simple linear regression test

Variable	β	R^2	Sig.
(Constant) Psycap*work readiness	0.649	0.506	0.000

Based on the analysis, a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05) indicates a significant effect of psychological capital on work readiness among final-year students in Bandung. The beta regression coefficient of 0.649 indicates a positive effect, meaning that the higher an individual's self-esteem, the higher their psychological capital, and the higher their work readiness. The lower their psychological capital, the lower their work readiness. Furthermore, the R-square value of 0.506 indicates a significant effect of psychological capital on work readiness, amounting to 50.6%. In addition to analyzing the main variables in the study, the researchers also analyzed data based on respondents' demographic characteristics, namely gender, university, and major. This analysis aimed to determine whether there were differences in levels of psychological capital and work readiness based on these demographic categories.

Table 6. Gender Regression Analysis

Gender	N	R^2	Sig.	β
Men	85	0.617	0.000	0.786
Women	135	0.435	0.000	0.659

Based on the results of the regression test between the psychological capital variable and work readiness, the male respondents had a 61.7% effect with a significance value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect. Meanwhile, the female respondents had a 43.5% effect with a significance value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect.

Table 7. University regression analysis

University	N	R^2	Sig.	β
State University	115	0.526	0.000	0.726
Private University	105	0.467	0.000	0.684

Based on the results of the regression test between the psychological capital variable and work readiness, respondents with students from state universities (PTN) had an influence of 52.6%, while students from private universities (PTS) had an influence of 45.7%. Both showed a significance value of 0.000, indicating that this influence is significant. These test results indicate that psychological capital has a fairly strong influence on work readiness in both types of universities.

Table 8. Major regression analysis

Major	N	R^2	Sig.	β
Science and Technology	66	0.504	0.000	0.710
Social Science	154	0.507	0.000	0.712

Based on the results of the regression test between psychological capital and work readiness, respondents in the Science and Technology major category had an influence of 50.4% with a significance value of 0.000 indicating that this influence was significant, while respondents in the Social and Humanities major category had an influence of 50.7% with a significance value of 0.000 indicating that this category's influence was significant.

Psychological capital plays a crucial role in improving the work readiness of final-year students. This work readiness is influenced by two main factors: internal and external [17]. Internal factors encompass various positive psychological states possessed by an individual. These states, consisting of self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, are known as psychological capital [7]. External factors originate from outside the individual, such as family, community, work experience, information about the world of work, and infrastructure. This finding aligns with research showed that the higher the psychological capital a student possesses, the higher their work readiness in entering the workforce.

Final-year students with low psychological capital tend to lack self-confidence, give up easily, and are reluctant to take risks. They often doubt their abilities, view failure as the end, lack a clear plan, and struggle to bounce back from stress [7]. Low self-efficacy makes them hesitate to complete their thesis or participate in job selection. A lack of optimism makes them easily discouraged and tends to procrastinate. Low hope is characterized by a lack of career goals, while weak resilience is evident in their difficulty bouncing back from failure [7].

High levels of psychological capital demonstrate confident, optimistic, resilient, and goal-oriented behavior. They confidently take on challenges, see obstacles as opportunities, develop plans, and are able to recover from failures with composure [7]. In final-year students, high psychological capital is evident in adaptive behavior when facing academic demands and preparing for work [7]. They have high self-efficacy, which makes them confident in completing their thesis, job interviews, or internship selections. Optimism drives them to remain enthusiastic when facing thesis revisions or job rejections, because they view obstacles as a learning process. High hope keeps them goal-oriented, for example by developing learning strategies and career

planning. Finally, resilience is reflected in the ability to bounce back from academic failure or job rejection, stay motivated, and continue their efforts [7].

Students with work readiness generally exhibit behaviors that reflect their readiness for the world of work. They strive for self-improvement and are able to control their emotions under pressure [6]. Although doubts occasionally arise, confidence in their knowledge and skills makes them more confident in completing assignments. Furthermore, they view criticism as a learning tool, are able to work collaboratively in teams, and can apply academic knowledge in the workplace [18]. Based on regression analysis, it was found that psychological capital has a significant influence on work readiness in both genders. But with varying degrees of influence indicates that psychological capital plays a more dominant role in shaping work readiness in men.

In general, men tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy in professional and technical contexts. Social encouragement to take on risky roles can strengthen this self-belief, which directly enhances work readiness. Research has demonstrated a strong relationship between self-efficacy and job performance [19]. Furthermore, social and cultural factors also play a significant role; men are often encouraged to demonstrate resilience, initiative, and independence. These norms align with the resilience and self-efficacy dimensions of psychological capital, strengthening the relationship between psychological capital and observed work readiness [20]. Thus, while psychological capital is important for both, its influence is stronger in men due to the combination of high self-efficacy, a clear career orientation, and the reinforcement of social norms.

Furthermore, regression results from universities indicate that 52.6% of respondents in this study came from state universities (PTN). This proportion is important because the context of the educational institution also influences the formation of students' psychological capital. Students at state universities generally have broader access to academic facilities, research opportunities, and diverse organizational activities. This access strengthens self-efficacy, as students feel more confident in their academic and professional abilities [21]. In addition to academic facilities, state universities also generally have a self-development ecosystem through student activity units, exchange programs, and internship opportunities. Involvement in these programs contributes to increased hope and optimism, as students learn to set long-term goals and develop more adaptive strategies for facing challenges [22]. The competitive environment of state universities also encourages students to build resilience, the ability to bounce back from failure, for example when facing competition for internships or academic competitions [23].

Furthermore, the results of the study programs show that 50.4% of students major in science and technology (SAINTEK). Students majoring in science and technology are accustomed to facing academic challenges that require intense problem-solving and critical thinking. These skills foster self-efficacy because they believe they can handle complex tasks [24]. The involvement of science and technology students in activities that foster adaptability and practical skills, such as fieldwork, practicums, or research, indirectly strengthens career readiness (career adaptability) by improving employability skills, which are significantly influenced by psychological capital [24]. The findings of this study have important implications for facing the challenges of a dynamic workplace. A limitation is that this study focused only on final-year students in the Bandung area, so the results cannot be generalized to students in other regions or at different educational levels.

5 CONCLUSION

The analysis results show that psychological capital has a positive and significant effect on work readiness among final-year students in Bandung. This finding confirms that students' readiness to face the world of work is determined not only by technical or academic factors, but also by their psychological capital, such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Furthermore, this finding indicates that the influence of psychological capital on work readiness differs between genders, with the effect being stronger in males. Future research can consider expanding the research subjects to different regions, majors, or educational levels to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Furthermore, external factors that may influence this research, such as social support, the campus environment, internship experience, and family economic conditions, also have the potential to influence student work readiness.

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