

THE EFFECT OF PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES TOWARDS EMPLOYABILITY WITH JOB-SEEKING SKILLS AS MODERATING VARIABLE

O EFEITO DAS HABILIDADES PROFISSIONAIS E QUALIDADES PESSOAIS PARA A EMPREGABILIDADE COM AS HABILIDADES DE PROCURA DE EMPREGO COMO VARIÁVEL MODERADORA

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the effect of professional skills and personal qualities on employability with job-seeking skills as a moderating variable. This research used the SEM-PLS method involving 242 students in Bali. The results of data analysis showed 1) there is no effect of professional skills (X1) on employability (Y2), 2) there is an effect of personal qualities (X2) on employability (Y2), 3) there is an effect of professional skills (X1) on job-seeking skills (Y1), 4) the effect of personal qualities (X2) on job-seeking skills (Y1), 5) the existence of job-seeking skills (X2) on employability (Y2), 6) the significant simultaneous effect of personal quality (X2) and job-seeking skills (X1) on employability (Y2). The results of this research illustrate that employability is greatly affected by personal quality. Therefore, vocational programs at the tertiary level need to integrate personal quality values such as integrity and initiative in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Employability, Professional Skills, Personal Qualities, Job-Seeking Skills.

<u>Resumo</u>

Esta investigação tem como objetivo identificar o efeito das competências profissionais e das qualidades pessoais na empregabilidade, tendo as competências de procura de emprego como variável moderadora. Esta pesquisa utilizou o método SEM-PLS envolvendo 242 estudantes em Bali. Os resultados da análise dos dados mostraram 1) não há efeito das competências profissionais (X1) na empregabilidade (Y2), 2) há efeito das qualidades pessoais (X2) na empregabilidade (Y2), 3) há efeito das qualidades profissionais competências (X1) nas competências de procura de emprego (Y1), 4) o efeito das qualidades pessoais (X2) nas competências de procura de emprego (Y1), 5) a existência de competências de procura de emprego (X2) na empregabilidade (Y2), 6) o efeito simultâneo significativo das competências profissionais (X1) e das competências de procura de emprego (X2); 7) existe um efeito simultâneo significativo da qualidade pessoal (X2) e das competências de procura de emprego (Y1) na empregabilidade (Y2). Os resultados desta pesquisa ilustram que a empregabilidade é muito afetada pela qualidade pessoal. Portanto, os programas vocacionais de nível superior precisam integrar valores de qualidade pessoal, como integridade e iniciativa, no processo de ensino e aprendizagem.

Palavras-chave: Empregabilidade, competências profissionais, qualidades pessoais, competências de procura de emprego

Introduction

Work-oriented vocational education has been developed and received important attention in Indonesia recently. However, in reality the problem of high unemployment is still a major concern among vocational practitioner (PRASETYA; SUMANTO, 2022). Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that unemployment in Indonesia at the high school education level is 1.93 million, at the vocational school level it is 1.73 million, at the Diploma education level it is 220,932 and at the Bachelor education level it is 729,601. This data shows that there is a gap between vocational education graduates, where graduates should get jobs instead become contributors to unemployment at quite high rates.

This problem is caused by various factors. The lack of available jobs has resulted in an oversupply of workers, both high school and college graduates. Apart from that, the skill competency possessed by job seekers is still considered low so that it does not meet the expectations of users, or in other words does not meet the criteria determined by the company. A mismatch between graduate competencies and the competencies desired by employers is also an important factor that causes unemployment (FRANITA; FUADY, 2019).

Various efforts have been made to prepare graduates to be accepted into the world of work, but have not obtained maximum results. Vocational schools and vocational education which were expected to be a link and match bridge because they have a dual system education have apparently not met expectations (MAULINA; YOENANTO, 2022). There are still many graduates who have not yet been absorbed into the world of work. The non-absorption of graduates is not absolutely because there are no job opportunities, but because of the low competency of graduates. Many available job vacancies go unfilled because applicants do not meet the employer's criteria. There are also many graduates whose jobs are not in accordance with the areas of competency studied. This phenomenon illustrates that the employability of workers in Indonesia is still low compared to other ASEAN countries. Therefore, Indonesia needs to improve itself and develop forward following other ASEAN countries (BAITI, 2017).

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In the current labor market, there has been very rapid and continuous change which has become a challenge in itself, namely regarding job content, the ability of organizations to find good employees and the capacity of graduates to find suitable jobs (NICOLESCU; NICOLESCU, 2019). In this context, both for individuals looking for work (supply side) and for organizations looking for workers (demand side), as well as for society as a whole in all job vacancies, employability is a very important aspect because it is a reality that concerns individuals and organizations. , and society (NIKUNEN, 2021)

Yorke and Knight (2006) state that employability is 'a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation. Harvey (2007) describes employability as an individual's ability to be employed in a job; and these abilities include qualifications, skills, knowledge and personal attributes. He also emphasized that employability is the capacity and willingness to become and remain attractive in the labor market, by anticipating changes in tasks and work environments and reacting to these changes in a proactive way. Pegg et al., (2006) also emphasize that employability is a series of achievements – skills, understanding and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to get a job and be

successful in the job of their choice, thereby providing benefits to themselves, the world of work, society and economy.

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Several earlier studies had identified the importance of fostering students' employability and how it helps them have better chances to get a job. However, there is still little study investigated the factors that contributed to the development of students' employability. As Nicolescu and Nicolescu (2019) point out that employability is developed by several constructs such as professional skills, transferrable skills, personal qualities, job-seeking skills, Corporate work-related skills, and employability confidence. To fill the existing gap, the current study aimed at identifying the influence of the construct of employability towards employability through SEM-PLS Model. However, in this research the constructs used are professional skills, personal qualities and job-seeking skills as moderate variables.

Professional Skills

Professional skills are the main skills needed by individuals to support their careers. When individuals are enrolled in educational institutions and training centers to pursue educational programs, or when they are recruited in organizations to carry out job duties, they need to focus on developing professional skills (HABYBELLAH *et al.*, 2019). Apart from having adequate information needed to carry out tasks and activities well, individuals also need to pay attention to honing their professional skills (TASTANBEKOVA *et al.*, 2021). Professional skills are enhanced by individuals either independently or by seeking support and assistance from others. In some cases, when individuals focus on enriching professional skills, they are enrolled in educational institutions and training centers. For example, there are courses in areas such as communication, technical skills, project management, conflict management and so on. In this research, 6 indicators were taken to reflect the professional skills variable, namely: 1) technical skills, 2) conflict resolution skills, 3) managerial skills, 4) time management skills, 5) communication skills, 6) teamwork and collaboration.

Personal Qualities

Personal quality is defined as a skill possessed by a person in managing himself so that he is able to benefit himself, other people and also his environment, including family, work environment and society (MURDOKO, 2006). Personal Quality is the extent to which a person can express positive personal attributes, practice good human relations, and demonstrate superior work performance which is the foundation of organizational quality (NALHI, 2009). Lim et al., (2016) explained that personal qualities are a set of skills that describe the abilities a person has which are usually used as an assessment when applying for a job. Potgieter and Coetzee (2013) explain that personal qualities are an important part of the job search process and will later influence company development. If someone has good personal qualities, this will help the company to continue to exist and be able to compete with other companies. The indicators of personal qualities in this study are 1) initiative, 2) adaptability, 3) confident, 4) professional and 5) integrity.

Job-Seeking Skills

Job search is a goal-directed and self-regulating process in which cognition, affect, and behavior are devoted to preparing for, identifying, and pursuing employment opportunities (VAN HOOFT *et al.*, 2021). Job seeking is conceptualized as a pattern of action that reflects the process of self-regulation because job searches are mostly carried out independently and are often long-term and competitive, job seekers must be able to regulate the job search process independently (KANFER; KANTROWITZ; WANBERG, 2001). For example, job seekers must make decisions about their employment goals and strategies, and plan, organize, and execute search behavior consistent with those goals and strategies. At the same time, because the job search is characterized by uncertainty, financial stress, and various setbacks, it is stressful for many individuals (CRAYNE, 2020). A person's ability to find work is also influenced by the way he or she organizes the job search process, because selecting effective job search channels has a major impact on employability (SINGH *et al.*, 2017). The job-seeking skills construct consists of the following items: effective use of information sources in the job search (MCQUAID; LINDSAY, 2005).

The individual's ability to participate in the selection process (SINGH *et al.*, 2017), awareness about job market availability and job opportunities and knowledge of the general steps of the selection process including interviews and tests (VARGAS *et al.*, 2018). The indicators of job-seeking skills are 1) effective use of information sources in job search, 2) individual ability to participate in the selection process, 3) awareness about job market availability and job opportunities, 4) knowledge of the general steps of the selection process including interviews and tests.

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Employability

Employability reflects an individual's ability to get a job, keep a job, and change jobs within the same industry (HOLMES, 2001). Employability is a concept that discusses how to re-employ people who previously worked, how people who have worked can remain competitive in the labor market, or how graduates or students enter the labor market (BERNTSONN, 2008). The indicators of employability in this study are: 1) career identity, 2) adaptation, 3) optimism, 4) learning propensity, 5) openness, 6) self-efficacy, and 7) social and human capital

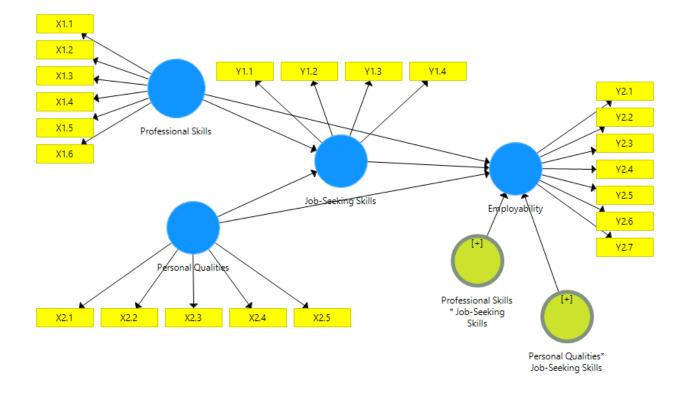
The PLS-SEM model used is presented in the following figure.



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Figure 1 – PLS-SEM Model



Research Design and Method

This research attempts to describe the research variables, namely the factors that affect students' employability. The factors that will be surveyed are: 1) employability as the dependent variable and the independent variable, namely: 2) professional skills, 3) personal qualities, and 4) job-seeking skills. One of the three independent variables will occupy the position as a mediator variable which is job-seeking skills. This research is more focused on knowing the predictive ability of exogenous variables (independent variables) on endogenous variables (dependent variables), as well as knowing the construct model for variables that have a significant relationship. With the characteristics of the main objective of this research, the data analysis technique used in this research is the SEM-PLS analysis technique

Sample

The proposed research model was tested with vocational students in Bali. Through convenience sampling, 424 students enrolled in the final year of diploma programs were invited and incentivized to participate in the survey.

Data Collection

Four questionnaires were used in this study. The questionnaires were developed based on constructs of employability with seven indicators, professional skills with six indicators, personal qualities with five indicators, and job-seeking skills with four indicators. The questionnaires were first validity and reliability checked. Results from construct validity results showed that all items had less than 0.05 (ranged 0.001 – 0.008) which indicated a high validity. Results from Cronbach Alpha analysis confirmed that the questionnaires had more than 0.80 reliability.

Data Analysis

In determining the effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable, the "Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) technique was used." This PLS model approach is suitable for prediction purposes. SEM-PLS is basically a multivariate analysis that explains the application of several general models, including: (1) canonical correlation technique, (2) redundancy analysis, (3) multiple regression, (4) multivariate analysis of variance (Manova), and (5) principal component analysis. We also assessed the measurement model and examined the constructs' properties. This included testing the measurement model's discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability.

Results & Discussions

Testing the direct effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable using the Structural Equation Modeling technique with Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS) using SmartPLS 3.2.9 for Windows software, obtained the

results of loading factor (Original Sample) Sample Mean, Standard Deviation, T Statistics and P Values as in following table.

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	Original	Sample	Standard	Т	Р	Information
	Sample	Mean	Deviation	Statistics	Values	
Job-seeking skills ->						Significant
Employability	0,342	0,351	0,053	6,391	0,000	
Professional skills ->						Not
Employability	0,085	0,087	0,049	1,745	0,082	Significant
Professional skills -> Job-						Significant
seeking skills	0,182	0,184	0,081	2,259	0,024	
Professional skills*Job-						Not
seeking skills ->						Significant
Employability	0,14	0,112	0,093	1,502	0,134	
Personal qualities ->						Significant
Employability	0,539	0,539	0,042	12,776	0,000	
Personal qualities -> Job-						Significant
seeking skills	0,346	0,346	0,072	4,8	0,000	
Personal qualities*Job-						Significant
seeking skills ->						
Employability	-0,134	-0,12	0,067	2,017	0,044	

Table 1 – Direct Effect Between Variables

The effect of professional skills on employability

The results of the analysis show that there is no effect of professional skills (X1) on employability (Y2) as indicated by the p value of 0.082 > 0.05. It can be concluded that professional skills do not have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. This means that improving professional skills cannot yet lead to increased employability. Professional skills are skills that are only possessed when someone is familiar with the working environment (METSO; KIANTO, 2014). Professional skills development can only be done during a period of on-the-job learning as part of a more formal vocational education program. Providing learning opportunities in real workplace contexts is important because professional learning has been shown to occur best in authentic environmental situations (FELSTEAD *et al.*, 2010).

The effect of personal qualities on employability

Personal quality (X2) effected employability (Y2) indicated from the p value of 0.000 < 0.05 (significant). Personal quality has a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. This means that improving personal qualities can lead to increased employability. Personal quality is an important asset before going to real working situation. Someone who has good personal quality values tends to find work easily and have a brilliant career (SOELISTYA *et al.*, 2023). Having good personal qualities will be able to increase a person's work productivity and make that person someone who can be trusted. Among employability assets, personal quality is considered a basic asset as an important trait for employees (NICOLESCU; NICOLESCU, 2019).

The effect of professional skills on job-seeking skills

The results of the analysis show that there is an effect of professional skills (X1) on job-seeking skills (Y1) indicated by the p value 0.024 < 0.05 (significant). It stressed that professional skills have a direct, positive and significant effect on job-seeking skills. A person's ability to find work is also effected by the way he organizes the job-seeking process, because selecting effective job-seeking channels has a major impact on employability (SINGH *et al.*, 2017). Individuals with professional skills have higher self-perceptions of job-seeking skills, because employability is seen to be effected by job-seeking abilities (VARGAS *et al.*, 2018).

The effect of personal qualities on job-seeking skills

Table 1 indicated that that there is an effect of personal quality (X2) on jobseeking skills (Y1) (p= < 0.05). Personal quality has a direct, positive and significant effect on job-seeking skills. This means that improving personal qualities can lead to improved job-seeking skills. Job-seeking efforts are initiative efforts. Indicators of personal qualities and job-seeking skills are positively correlated with each other. An example is an individual's ability to participate in the selection process. In the selection process, of course, job seekers must show positive personal qualities so

that they are able to get a good assessment from employers and increase their chances of getting the desired job (ONYISHI *et al.*, 2015).

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The effect of job-seeking skills on employability

The results of the analysis show that there are job-seeking skills (X2) on employability (Y2) indicated by the p value of 0.000 < 0.05 (significant). It can be concluded that job-seeking skills have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. This means that improving job-seeking skills can lead to increased employability. Job-seeking efforts can certainly reflect employability (NICOLESCU; NICOLESCU, 2019). In the process, job-seeking involves activities that are correlated with employability. For example, the effective use of information sources in a jobseeking is closely related to how a person has the personal capital to look for opportunities. available to make it easier to get a job.

The simultaneous effect of professional skills and job-seeking skills on employability

There was no simultaneous effect of professional skills (X1) and job-seeking skills (X2) on employability (Y2) indicated (p>0.05). Professional skills and job-seeking skills simultaneously do not have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. This means that improving professional skills and job-seeking skills cannot yet lead to increased employability. From the research results, having professional skills and job-seeking skills is not something that can determine employability. There are other factors that are a priority for someone to be able to have good employability so that the likelihood of being accepted into a company will be higher. Someone with high technical ability as an indicator of professional skills is not a guarantee of getting a job (GHOUSE; CHAUDHARY; GARG, 2018). Companies certainly look for added value from prospective employees so that they have differences from other perspective employees, such as non-technical abilities.

The simultaneous effect of personal qualities and job-seeking skills on employability

The results of the analysis show that there is a significant simultaneous effect of personal quality (X2) and job-seeking skills (Y1) on employability (Y2) as indicated by the p value of 0.044 < 0.05 (significant). Personal qualities and jobseeking skills simultaneously have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. This means that improving personal qualities and job-seeking skills can lead to increased employability. In all significant variables, personal quality has the highest effect on employability. Personal qualities, the ability to identify and suggest new ideas to complete work contribute greatly to problem solving in organizations (MCMURRAY *et al.*, 2016). In addition, personal quality indicators such as integrity, have the highest scores. Integrity can be exemplified by many traits, including honesty, loyalty, respect, and responsibility, and this is important in making decisions, serving customers, and managing employees. This is an important thing that can make someone have a good career and be worthy of being an organizational leader (PILLAY, 2014).

Based on the results of research on the effect of professional skills (X1) and personal qualities (X2) as independent variables, job-seeking skills (Y1) as moderating variables and employability (Y2) as dependent variables, the implications of the research results are as follows: 1. Strengthening professional skills does not necessarily strengthen employability. Strengthening professional skills needs to be accompanied by strengthening other skills to strengthen employability. 2. Strengthening personal qualities can strengthen employability. Strengthening personal qualities, especially the values of integrity, initiative, adaptability and self-confidence, can be done through work practice and early development. 3. Strengthening professional skills can strengthen job-seeking skills. 4. Strengthening personal qualities can strengthen job-seeking skills. 5. Strengthening job-seeking skills will strengthen employability. 6. Strengthening professional skills and job-seeking skills does not necessarily strengthen employability. Strengthening professional skills must also be strengthened by non-

technical skills. 7. Strengthening personal qualities and job-seeking skills will strengthen employability.

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Conclusion

Based on the problems studied and the findings of this research, this study concluded: 1. Professional skills do not have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. 2. Personal quality has a direct, positive and significant effect on employability. 3. Professional skills have a direct, positive and significant effect on job search skills 4. Personal qualities have a direct, positive and significant effect on job search skills 5. Job search skills have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability 6. Professional skills and job search skills simultaneously do not have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability 5. Significant effect on employability 7. Personal qualities and job search skills simultaneously do not have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability 7. Personal qualities and job search skills simultaneously have a direct, positive and significant effect on employability.

This study proposed some important recommendation. 1. Universities should not only focus on students' professional skills. Students also need to be equipped with non-technical skills so that they have more advantages and become a high bargaining chip when applying for jobs 2. Universities need to emphasize personal quality values to students because it has been proven that personal quality has the greatest influence on employability. 3. Strengthening students' job search skills through the mechanism of utilizing job vacancy information sources. 4. Further research needs to look for other variables that could influence employability.





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