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The Effect of Self-Efficacy and Employability Skills on Graduates' Absorption Capacity Through Alumni Work Readiness as a Moderator Variable

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A B S T R A C T

This study is motivated by the importance of self-efficacy and employability skills in preparing graduates of the Culinary Arts Education Bachelor's degree to face a competitive world of work. The purpose of the study was to analyze the effect of self-efficacy and employability skills on alumni work readiness, as well as their impact on graduate absorption. The research method used a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method, involving 58 respondents who graduated from the Culinary Arts Education Bachelor's degree program in 2023. Data collection was carried out through online questionnaires and documentation, with data analysis using the path analysis method. The results showed that self-efficacy did not have a significant effect on alumni work readiness, while employability skills had a significant effect. This study concludes the importance of developing employability skills in improving graduate work readiness, although its relationship with graduate absorption requires further research .

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INTRODUCTION

Graduates of Culinary Arts Education are expected to have hard skills and soft skills that are useful for facing the competitive world of work. According to Afriani and Setiyani (2015), these soft skills have an influence on the skills or things needed in the world of work, which are known as employability skills. Employability skills are skills that enable someone to get a job or to be able to continue working, including personal skills, interpersonal skills, attitudes, habits, and behaviors. Employability skills are seen from three main skill elements, namely (1) fundamental skills , (2) personal management skills and (3) teamwork skills . Employability skills are work skills that refer to general or non-technical competencies that include achievements, understanding and personal attributes that enable someone to get a job and be successful in their chosen job (Berntson and Marklund 2020).

Employability skills are a guideline on how to get a job according to their professional qualifications, thereby increasing the attractiveness to be recruited by companies. These employability skills components are expected to have an impact on the work readiness of graduates. Employability skills can be an intermediary to prepare graduates' work readiness, which includes communication, teamwork and collaboration, and innovation, which are important things in developing work readiness that meets industry needs (Caballero 2017). Work readiness is defined as an individual's work eligibility that includes skills and attributes to enter the workforce. This is the first step to prevent unemployment rates. If the graduate's work readiness is good, then it can be estimated that the graduate will immediately work. Work readiness is the overall condition of a person which includes harmony between physical, mental and experience maturity so that they are able to carry out an activity in relation to a task or job.

Alumni who have work readiness are individuals who have knowledge of what they will do, know the requirements or criteria that must be possessed as a job applicant for a job, know how to behave or behave as a competent worker, and have the ability to understand and overcome problems in a task or job. Employability skills development can be done through introductory lecture activities, affective learning, application of student-centered learning strategies/methods, giving lecture assignments, extracurricular and student activities, and industrial work practices. Preparation of students to have technical skills and generic skills (employability skills) is based on the quality of the implementation of the learning program. The implementation of the learning program occurs interaction between various factors, both raw input factors (students) and instrumental input.

Various research results show factors that interact with each other in the learning process including the learning system, the learning environment created when the learning process occurs as a factor that mediates the development of student skills. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of self-efficacy and employability skills on alumni work readiness, as well as its impact on graduate absorption. It is expected that the results of this study can provide in-depth insight into the factors that influence the work readiness of Culinary Arts

Education graduates, so that they can be a reference for educational institutions in developing more effective curricula and programs to improve students' employability skills and self-efficacy. In addition, the findings of this study are expected to help graduates prepare themselves for the competitive world of work, as well as provide input for related industries in recruiting and developing quality workers. Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute to increasing graduate absorption in the labor market and reducing unemployment rates among Culinary Arts Education graduates.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Student Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an important psychological concept in social cognitive theory developed by Albert Bandura, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute the actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997). In the context of higher education, academic self-efficacy refers to the extent to which students believe in their capacity to complete academic tasks, understand material, and face learning challenges independently and consistently. Students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to demonstrate higher academic engagement, are more willing to take risks in learning, are able to cope with academic stress, and tend to achieve better academic performance. Several recent studies from 2023 to 2025 support the important role of self-efficacy in learning achievement. Li et al. (2023) in the journal Sustainability found that self-efficacy has both direct and indirect effects on student learning outcomes through academic engagement as a mediator. This means that the higher students' beliefs in themselves, the more likely they are to be actively involved in the learning process, and this has a positive impact on their academic achievement (Li et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research by Huang et al. (2024) conducted in Jilin, China, showed that self-efficacy acts as a mediator between learning strategies and the academic achievement of English language students. This finding suggests that even good learning strategies may not be effective if students lack the confidence to implement them (Huang et al., 2024). A study by Xu et al. (2024) in the journal Behavioral Sciences adds a social dimension to the formation of self-efficacy, showing that social environments such as group learning norms and peer expectations contribute to increased learning engagement through increased self-efficacy. This suggests that students' self-confidence is influenced not only by personal experiences but also by the support and social dynamics surrounding them. The online learning context also reinforces the importance of self-efficacy, as demonstrated by research by Topal and Şahin (2023), who concluded that self-efficacy significantly influences students' learning engagement in online learning systems and strengthens their acceptance of digital technology as a learning medium.

In addition to impacting academic achievement, self-efficacy is also closely related to aspects of student well-being. A study by Fan & Wang (2023) showed that self-efficacy and grit are two key factors that improve the well-being of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, especially when supported by

teacher motivation and a supportive learning environment. This suggests that self-efficacy is not only crucial for learning success but also forms the psychological foundation for students' mental health amidst academic pressures. In Indonesia, research by Pratama & Sari (2023) revealed that self-efficacy plays a significant role in increasing students' academic resilience in the face of learning challenges and failures. Furthermore, gender is also known to moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. Research by Khalid & Rahman (2023) found that women demonstrated a stronger relationship between self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and academic outcomes than men. A follow-up study by Mattingly et al. (2024) in STEM fields confirmed that lecturers' recognition of female students' abilities significantly increased their self-efficacy and strengthened their participation in science and technology.

Overall, self-efficacy theory continues to demonstrate its relevance in higher education. Self-efficacy has been shown to be a strong predictor of academic performance, learning engagement, psychological well-being, and student resilience. Therefore, educational approaches that emphasize creating positive learning experiences (mastery experiences), providing constructive feedback (verbal persuasion), providing successful role models (vicarious experiences), and managing learning emotions are important strategies in shaping and strengthening student self-efficacy. Lecturers and higher education institutions need to actively design learning experiences that address not only cognitive but also affective and social aspects that support the growth of student self-confidence in facing current and future academic challenges.

Student Employability Skill

Employability skills or work readiness skills are a set of non-technical and technical abilities that individuals need to obtain and maintain employment and thrive in a constantly changing work environment. Conceptually, employability encompasses a combination of fundamental skills (such as communication and numeracy), cognitive skills (critical thinking, problem-solving), and social and personal skills (collaboration, adaptability, self-responsibility, and self-confidence). In a recent systematic study, Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) identified that the six most essential skills for the modern workplace are problem-solving, teamwork, effective communication, critical thinking, self-confidence, and adaptability, all of which are among the soft skills most sought after by employers. Pang (2024) found that Chinese students were on average at a moderate level of employability, particularly in collaborative and critical thinking aspects, and emphasized the importance of digital literacy and cross-cultural understanding in the global workplace. Furthermore, Connolly et al. (2023) stated that authentic assessment approaches implemented in higher education—for example, real-world case studies or interdisciplinary team projects—significantly strengthen employability skills because they provide relevant experience with real-world work challenges.

Meanwhile, quantitative research by Abdul Rahman and Mamat (2024) at Sultan Idris University of Education, Malaysia, stated that internships, co-curricular involvement, and entrepreneurship training significantly contribute to building graduates' self-confidence, managerial skills, and communication skills.

These findings are supported by a study by Allex Araújo et al. (2025), which evaluated the effectiveness of hackathons as an experiential learning method in developing creativity, collaboration, innovation, and time management in software engineering students. Furthermore, reports by Forbes Education (2025) and Reuters (2025) highlight that companies are increasingly prioritizing practical skills over formal degrees, with the growing practice of skill-based hiring for technology and green jobs. A study by Bone et al. (2023) emphasized that sectors such as AI, data science, and the green industry now value certifications, portfolios, and project experience more than just a diploma. Kovalev et al. (2025) also showed that non-technical graduates who participated in industry training or certification (e.g., AI-900 or competency-based courses) had higher employability rates than graduates with only an academic background. Therefore, the development of employability skills must be strategically integrated into higher education through active, collaborative, project-based learning methods and direct connections with the industrial world so that graduates are able to adapt to dynamic work needs.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method. The selection of this approach is based on the purpose of the study to describe and analyze the relationship between variables, including self-efficacy, employability skills, alumni work readiness, and graduate absorption. This approach allows researchers to collect numerical data that can be analyzed statistically, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The population in this study includes all graduates of the Culinary Arts Education Bachelor's Program who graduated in graduation waves 106, 107, and 108 in 2023, as well as users of graduates or employers where graduates work. The research sample focused on students from the 2016 to 2019 intake who graduated in 2024.

This sample selection allows researchers to obtain relevant and up-to-date data on the condition of graduates and their work readiness. The data collection techniques used in this study were carried out through two main techniques. First, the use of an online questionnaire distributed through the page https://tracerstudy.unesa.ac.id. This questionnaire was designed with closed answers using a Likert scale of 1-4, allowing respondents to provide measurable assessments. Second, is the documentation technique which is the collection of data in the form of data that supports this study (Coetzee, M., & Oosthuizen, R. M. 2019). This technique is used to collect supporting data that is relevant to the study, enriching the context and understanding of the results obtained from the questionnaire. The research instrument measures self-efficacy, employability skills, graduate absorption, and alumni work readiness. Self-efficacy includes aspects of magnitude, strength, and generality. Employability skills include interpersonal skills, initiative and business skills, and work skills. Graduate absorption focuses on alumni employment status. Graduated work readiness includes aspects of logical thinking, self-control, responsibility, and adaptability, and critical thinking skills. All indicators are measured on a Likert scale of 1-4,

allowing for comprehensive quantitative analysis and increasing the reliability and validity of the instrument. Data analysis in this study used the path analysis method with the help of SPSS software version 25. The analysis process includes two main stages: classical assumption testing and hypothesis testing through path analysis.

Hypothesis testing is carried out by looking at the path coefficient and p-value, with the basis for decision making at a significance level of 5%. If the p-value <0.05, H0 is rejected, indicating a significant influence of endogenous variables on exogenous variables. Conversely, if the p-value ≥ 0.05, H0 is accepted, indicating no significant influence. This analysis approach allows researchers to evaluate direct and indirect relationships between variables, providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics between self-efficacy, employability skills, alumni work readiness, and graduate absorption. The method section contains the research design, research subjects, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis presented in paragraph form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tracer Study Results

Tracer study conducted on the Culinary Arts Education Undergraduate Study Program showed quite significant results. Of the total 58 respondents, 100% have filled in the tracer data. The response rate of the Culinary Arts Education Undergraduate Study Program reached 100%, placing it in 2nd place in the Faculty of Engineering, with a gold standard achievement of 98,28% with graduate profile as an entrepreneur as 39,66%; as an employee as much as 51,72%; and decided to continue their study as much as 6,9% as seen in the figure below.

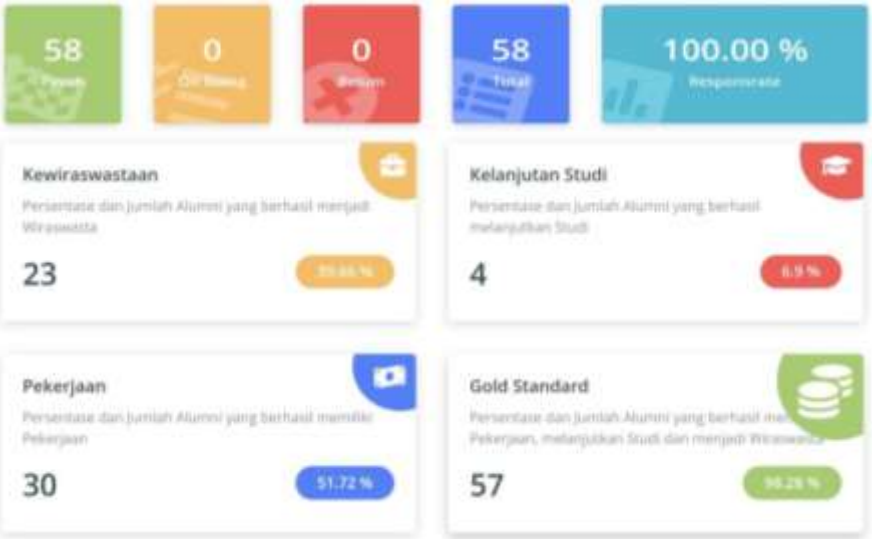

Figure 1. Summary Response Rate

The respondent profile is dominated by women (89%), and 11% are men. with the majority coming from the 2019 batch (56.8%) while the 2017 batch is 13.5%; the 2018 batch is 29.7%. The alumni status varies, including those who are already working, continuing their studies, entrepreneurs, and still looking for work. Most alumni work according to the graduate profile, such as teachers, cooks, cook helpers, and bakers, although there are also those who work in other

fields such as tellers and administration. The gold standard achievement shows that 13.89% of alumni are successful through entrepreneurship, 4.36% continue their studies, and 56.04% have jobs, with a total gold standard reaching 74.29%. Classical Assumption Test.

Table 1. Normality Test

Tests of Normality			
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov [a]		
	Statistics	df	Sig.
Self-Efficacy	.122	37	.184
Employability Skill	.120	37	.200 *

The classical assumption test was conducted to ensure the validity of the analysis model used. The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method showed that the variables Self-Efficacy and Employability Skill met the normality assumption, with significance values of 0.184 and 0.200 respectively, greater than the significance level of 0.05.

Table 2. Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients [a]			
Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Self-Efficacy	.396	2,528
	Employability Skill	.396	2,528
a. Dependent Variable: Absorption Capacity			

The multicollinearity test showed no symptoms of multicollinearity between the self-efficacy and employability skill variables and the absorption capacity variable, with a Tolerance value of 0.396 (>0.100) and VIF of 2.528 (<10.00) for both variables.

Table 3. Heteroscedasticity test

Coefficients [a]					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t Sig.
1	(Constant)	.347	.236		1,471 .151
	Self-Efficacy	-.010	.007	-.376	-1.445 .158
	Employability Skill	.007	.004	.470	1,803 .080

The test also showed no symptoms of heteroscedasticity, with the significant value of the self-efficacy variable of 0.158 and employability skill of 0.080, both greater than 0.05. These results indicate that the analysis model used meets the basic assumptions and is feasible to be used in further analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. T-test

Coefficients [a]			
Model		t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3,057	.004
	Self-Efficacy	.196	.846
	Employability Skill	4.944	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness			

Hypothesis testing was conducted through two stages of analysis. In the first analysis, the T-test showed that self-efficacy did not have a significant effect on alumni work readiness (sig. 0.846 > 0.05), while employability skills had a significant effect (sig. 0.000 < 0.05).

Table 5. F Test

ANOVA [a]			
Model		F	Sig.
1	Regression	32,859	.000 [b]
	Residual		
	Total		
a. Dependent Variable: Work Readiness			
b. Predictors: (Constant), Employability Skill, Self-Efficacy			

The F test shows that together, self-efficacy and employability skills have a significant effect on alumni work readiness (sig. 0.000 < 0.05). The R Square value of 0.659 shows that 65.9% of the variation in alumni work readiness can be explained by self-efficacy and employability skills.

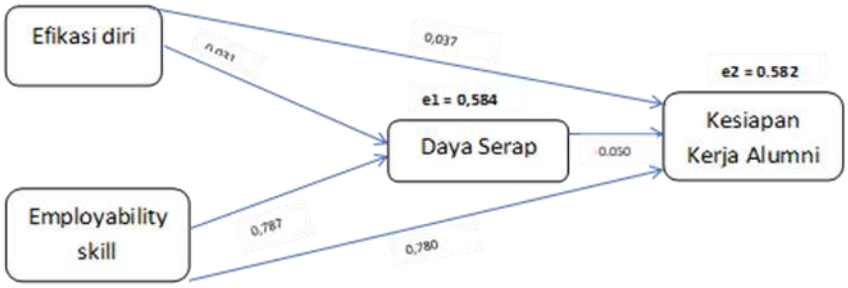

Figure 2. Pathway analysis model diagram

The influence of self-efficacy through alumni works readiness on absorption capacity, the direct influence given by efficacy on alumni work readiness is 0.037. While the indirect influence of self-efficacy through alumni work readiness on absorption capacity is the beta value (self-efficacy on absorption capacity) and beta value (absorption capacity on alumni work readiness), namely: 0.031 x (-0.050) = -0.019. Based on these calculations, the

direct influence is 0.037 and the indirect influence is -0.019, which means that the indirect influence is smaller than the direct influence, so that self-efficacy through alumni work readiness does not affect absorption capacity. The influence of employability skills through alumni works readiness on absorption capacity, the direct influence given by efficacy on alumni work readiness is 0.780. Meanwhile, the indirect effect of employability skills through alumni work readiness on absorption capacity is the beta value (employability skills on absorption capacity) and the beta value (absorption capacity on alumni work readiness), namely: 0.780 x (-0.050) = 0.73. Based on this calculation, the direct effect is 0.780 and the indirect effect is -0.73, which means that the indirect effect is smaller than the direct effect so that employability skills through work readiness do not affect absorption capacity.

The results showing that self-efficacy has no significant effect indicate that an individual's confidence in their ability to complete a job is not a determining factor in work readiness. *Employability skills* have been shown to have a significant effect on work readiness, these skills include *soft skills* (such as communication, leadership, and teamwork) and hard skills (specific technical skills). The increasingly competitive world of work, graduates who have *employability skills* are better prepared to face work challenges, are able to adapt to the work environment, and are productive in carrying out their duties. Previous studies have found a significant correlation between self-efficacy and *employability*. For example, research by Zhong et al. (2020) states that self-efficacy has a positive effect on students' work ability and competency levels, which directly increases their work readiness in a competitive labor market. In addition, Caballero et al. (2017) showed that high self-confidence related to self-efficacy helps graduates convince potential employers more easily, which has an impact on increasing *employability*. High self-efficacy increases an individual's confidence to overcome challenges in the work environment, while employability skills include adaptability, communication, and decision-making skills that are important in today's work environment. Direct influence is more significant than indirect influence, especially when self-efficacy and employability skills are considered against alumni's work readiness and their absorption in the world of work. A study by MDPI (2023) explains that employability skills, which include technical and non-technical skills, have a strong direct impact on work readiness and absorption. In contrast, indirect influences through mediators, such as work readiness, are often reduced by contextual factors, such as the gap between graduate skills and industry needs. Other studies have shown that self-efficacy plays an important role in shaping work behavior and individual readiness to adapt to the professional environment. However, its contribution to absorption through work readiness tends to be smaller than its direct influence. This is because self-efficacy is more effective in driving direct actions, such as improving individual performance in finding work, rather than influencing intermediary variables such as work readiness (Frontiers in Psychology, 2020). In addition, employability skills make a significant contribution to absorption by strengthening individuals' ability to navigate the recruitment process, but their effectiveness through work readiness

can be hampered by external challenges, such as mismatched expectations between graduates and employers (Berntson et al., 2020; García-Aracil & Van der Velden, 2019).

From a practical perspective, focusing on the direct development of self-efficacy and employability skills through training designed to enhance adaptability, communication, and critical thinking skills can provide better results in increasing graduate employability. This also supports the need to strengthen the relationship between higher education institutions and industry to reduce the skills gap and maximize the direct impact of employability skills on workforce employability (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2019; Tam & Liu, 2021). Employability skills have a significant direct impact on alumni work readiness, but the mediation effect through work readiness on absorption capacity is insignificant or even negative. A study by García-Aracil and Van der Velden (2019) supports this finding by showing that although employability skills are essential for professional success, their impact can be hampered by intermediary factors such as suboptimal work readiness or a mismatch between individual skills and labor market needs.

In the context of culinary education, employability skills such as time management, creativity, and stress management are essential to produce graduates who are ready to compete in the dynamic culinary industry. However, as highlighted by Tam and Liu (2021), the imbalance between training provided in educational institutions and industry needs can reduce the effectiveness of employability as a mediator. Furthermore, research shows that in a skills-based field such as culinary, practical experience and hands-on training contribute more to graduate employability than indirect influences through employability.

Additional research by Berntson et al. (2020) also noted that employability skills, especially in highly specific sectors such as culinary, are more effective when accompanied by work-based training that emphasizes hands-on practice. Culinary education needs to focus on developing employability skills directly through intensive practical modules and close collaboration with industry. In this way, work readiness remains an important component, but is not entirely dependent as a mediating pathway to absorption.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of the analysis of the influence of employability skills on absorption through alumni work readiness shows that the direct influence is more significant than the indirect influence. The beta value for the direct influence is 0.780, while the indirect influence through work readiness has a value of -0.73, indicating that mediation of work readiness has a smaller or even negative effect on absorption. This indicates that employability skills are more effective in increasing absorption directly, without having to go through work readiness as a mediator. In the context of culinary education, employability skills such as time management skills, interpersonal communication, and creativity have a major impact on alumni success in the culinary industry. However, mediation through work readiness can weaken this relationship if there is no alignment between the training provided by educational institutions and the needs of the labor market.

Therefore, a direct approach that focuses on developing employability skills through practical experience and industry collaboration is very important. To increase the absorption of culinary graduates, educational institutions are advised to integrate work-based training that emphasizes direct practice and industry experience. This approach not only reduces reliance on work readiness as a mediating pathway, but also ensures that graduates have relevant and industry-ready skills.

FURTHER STUDY

Further studies are recommended to expand the scope of this research by including additional variables such as industry networking, digital literacy, and labor market dynamics, which may also influence graduates' absorption capacity. Future research could employ a longitudinal design to track graduates' employment outcomes over time, providing deeper insights into the sustainability of employment and career progression. Moreover, conducting comparative studies across different universities, academic disciplines, and cultural contexts would help validate the moderating role of alumni work readiness in diverse environments. Incorporating qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with employers and alumni, could also enrich the findings by capturing nuanced perspectives on employability and workforce integration.

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