

# Enhancing Career Readiness Through Internship Efficacy, Career Adaptability, Soft Skills Development, Experiential Learning, Social Competency, and Curriculum Alignment: Hypothesis Development

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## Abstract

This research paper explores the multifaceted approach to enhancing career readiness among university students through the development of internship efficacy, career adaptability, soft skills, experiential learning, social competency, and curriculum alignment. Through a synthesis of empirical studies, we investigate how these components contribute to preparing students for a successful transition into the professional world. The paper hypothesizes positive impacts of each variable on career readiness and utilizes a conceptual framework to illustrate the relationships among these variables. Our analysis underscores the importance of a holistic educational approach that not only focuses on academic knowledge but also prioritizes practical skills and personal development to equip students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st-century workforce.

**Keywords:** Career Readiness; Internship Efficacy; Career Adaptability; Experiential Learning; Curriculum Alignment.

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## **1. Introduction**

Career readiness stands as a pivotal aim of higher education, underscoring the extent to which students are primed to not only enter but also thrive in the professional landscape. This essay delves into the indispensable roles played by internship efficacy, career adaptability, the cultivation of soft skills, experiential learning, social competency, and the alignment of curricula with the demands of the modern workplace, as highlighted by recent scholarly investigations.

Internship efficacy emerges as a cornerstone of career readiness. It furnishes students with invaluable practical experience and networking opportunities within their chosen fields. A study by [1] illuminates the profound impact of internship experiences on workforce readiness, amplified by the presence of motivation and academic achievement, with self-efficacy acting as a vital moderating factor. Their findings advocate for the enhancement of internship experiences, positing that when paired with heightened self-efficacy, they significantly bolster students' readiness for job market entry.

In the ever-evolving job market of today, career adaptability becomes crucial, enabling individuals to adeptly manage changes and challenges. References [2] explore the intermediary role of career decision self-efficacy between the efficacy of internships and career preparation among hospitality undergraduates. Their research reveals that students' motivation for learning positively affects the efficacy of internships, which in turn, via career decision self-efficacy, markedly improves career preparation.

The development of soft skills, encompassing abilities such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, is indispensable for achieving success in the workplace. References [3] underscore the effectiveness of a job readiness course in enhancing undergraduates' career self-efficacy, signifying the importance of embedding career-centric activities within educational curricula to nurture these critical skills. Their research demonstrates significant gains in career self-efficacy post-course, emphasizing the need for focused soft skills development.

Experiential learning acts as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and its practical application. References [4] affirms that internship experiences positively and significantly influence students' readiness for work, spotlighting the significance of hands-on learning environments in fostering career readiness.

Social competency, defined by qualities such as optimism, resilience, adaptivity, and the acknowledgment of crossover skills, is paramount for professional success.

The alignment of curricula with professional standards and industry requirements is foundational to ensuring career readiness. References [5] delve into the strategic incorporation of leadership and career development initiatives within college education, advocating for curriculum alignment as a critical measure to promote career readiness among students.

As a summary, the synergistic impact of internship efficacy, career adaptability, soft skills development, experiential learning, social competency, and curriculum alignment is indispensable for augmenting career readiness among students in higher education. This comprehensive approach, bolstered by empirical evidence,

calls for educational institutions to implement holistic strategies aimed at preparing students for the multifaceted challenges of the contemporary professional arena.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Effect of Internship Efficacy on Career Readiness***

Soft skills are becoming more recognized as critical for career readiness and success in today's workforce. This comprehensive exploration into the effects of developing soft skills on career readiness emphasizes the importance of adapting educational practices, curricula, and support systems to ensure students have the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to succeed in their chosen careers.

References [6] found that specific soft skills, such as creativity, teamwork skills, leadership skills, and lifelong learning skills, significantly affect career readiness. However, other skills like communication, problem-solving, and ethics had no significant impact, indicating that soft skills have a selective effect on career preparedness. This insight is essential for educational institutions aiming to enhance their students' career preparedness by focusing on developing specific soft skills.

References [7] emphasizes the transformative role of soft skills in the business economy, which is increasingly influenced by globalization. Effective communication, teamwork, leadership qualities, stress management, and emotional intelligence are among the skills that significantly contribute to career success and satisfaction. This perspective highlights the growing demand for soft skills in the workplace and their profound impact on career advancement and productivity.

References [8] review the benefits and development of soft skills, revealing their critical role in individual career development. They advocate for education and training that focuses on enhancing these skills to maintain a competitive edge in the job market. This research supports the idea that soft skills are learnable and improvable, reinforcing the need for educational strategies to develop these skills.

References [9] discusses the importance of soft skills in the workplace, identifying them as critical for professional development, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and achieving workplace success. This underlines the need for soft skills training for students to perform effectively in their academic environment and future workplace.

References [10] highlight the impact of soft skills training on student character development, showing significant improvements in students' character values after receiving soft skill training. This finding illustrates the effectiveness of soft skills training in enhancing students' readiness for the workplace by encouraging responsible and positive work behaviors.

In conclusion, these studies provide a robust foundation for the hypothesis that soft skills development has a significant positive impact on career readiness. They offer insights that can inform the design of educational practices and curricula aimed at equipping students with the essential soft skills needed for professional success,

thereby making meaningful contributions to the workforce.

### ***2.2 Effects of career adaptability on the career readiness***

The investigation of the relationship between career adaptability and career readiness is crucial in understanding how individuals can prepare for and succeed in the workforce. This examination focuses on how adaptability resources and adapting responses contribute to the skills and attitudes necessary for career readiness. By examining several studies, we can gain insights that can inform educational practices, curricula, and support systems that equip students with the required competencies for success in their chosen careers.

Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that is essential for managing career-related tasks, transitions, and traumas across an individual's lifespan, as emphasized by [11]. This study highlights the positive correlation of career adaptability with a sense of control, social support, self-esteem, career optimism, and well-being, underscoring its role in facilitating successful vocational transitions.

Adapting responses and adaptability resources are crucial for positive transitions and personal functioning from teenage years through adulthood, as highlighted by [12] systematic review of career adaptability literature. The review provides directions for future research, including theoretical, practical, empirical, and methodological contributions that could enhance the understanding and application of career adaptability.

Reference [13] conclude that adaptability in young adulthood is generally high or mature and explore why certain career aspects and reasons for adaptability are more prominent at this stage. The study emphasizes the benefits of possessing high career adaptability.

Reference [14] examine the contributions of career success criteria and locus of control to adaptive readiness, revealing that intrinsic fulfillment, work-life balance, and internal career locus of control predict career adaptability, thereby affecting career decision-making self-efficacy. This study aligns with the career adaptation model, indicating that adaptive readiness directly and indirectly influences career adaptability and career preparedness outcomes.

These studies provide a comprehensive overview of how career adaptability influences career readiness, emphasizing the importance of developing adaptive skills and resources to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the professional world effectively. Further research is essential to expand on these findings, offering deeper insights into tailoring educational programs and support systems to foster adaptability and readiness among students as they transition into the workforce. Thus, hypothesis 2 was formulated as shown below:

H2: Career Adaptability has significance positive impact on Career Readiness

### ***2.3 Effects of soft skills Development on the career readiness***

It is of great importance for educators to develop practical English language communication skills, especially in

the university context where English is not the first language. These skills are crucial for personal growth as well as career advancement. Several studies have been conducted to understand the impact of English communication skills among university educators and the strategies to enhance them.

Reference [15] have studied the effectiveness of the B.Ed. English Language Curriculum in developing students' speaking and writing skills in Pakistan. They have evaluated the curriculum using Stufflebeam's CIPP model and have concluded that the curriculum needs to be revised. This revision should include objectives, an evaluation scheme, and a balanced focus on language skills. The study has highlighted the challenges faced due to weak language backgrounds of students, lack of teacher training, and inadequate infrastructure, emphasizing the need for comprehensive curriculum development to improve communication skills.

Reference [16] has focused on innovative methods used in foreign language teaching to foster communicative competence among students. The study suggests that incorporating multimedia elements and interactive techniques can significantly enhance students' mastery of communicative competence, which is vital for effective communication in professional activities.

Reference [17] has emphasized the need for focused training in communication skills within the curriculum, discussing the challenges students face in acquiring practical communication skills in English. The study has pointed out that students' negative attitudes towards lectures and the misuse of technology are contributing factors to the deterioration of communication skills acquisition, highlighting the critical role of educators in addressing these challenges.

Reference [18] have analyzed the development of effective intercultural communication skills among university students. They have emphasized the role of game modelling in communication situations to optimize the development of these skills. The research underscores the importance of creating communicative situations that closely approximate real ones to enhance students' practical intercultural communication skills.

These studies have highlighted the significance of developing practical English language communication skills among university educators and students. By addressing the challenges identified and implementing the suggested strategies, educational institutions can significantly enhance the communicative competence of their educators and students, thereby improving overall educational outcomes and career readiness. Thus, hypothesis 3 was formulated as shown below:

H3: Soft skills Development has significant positive impact on the career readiness.

#### ***2.4 Effects of Experiential Learning on the career readiness***

The relationship between experiential learning and career outcomes can offer valuable insights for graduates in fields like International Development Studies (IDS) in their career preparation. [19] studies explore this connection, highlighting how experiential learning plays a vital role in shaping career success.

Reference [19] conducted a national survey with 1,901 IDS alumni across Canada to examine the impact of

experiential learning on career outcomes. They argue that understanding alumni perspectives on experiential learning can inform program opportunities and emphasize the significance of work-integrated learning in achieving career success within this field. This study underscores the importance of experiential learning in preparing students for the workforce by providing them with real-world experiences and skills that are directly applicable to their future careers.

Reference [20] research focuses on experiential learning opportunities offered through university-affiliated business incubators and how they can help undergraduate students prepare for their future careers. This study highlights how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can assist students in developing career-readiness attributes, facilitating a smooth transition from college to professional endeavors.

Reference [21] illustrate the significant influence of student attitudes and values on the practical application of acquired knowledge and skills. They describe the Absorb-Do-Connect learning framework and explain its alignment with self-efficacy theory, emphasizing the importance of students' engagement in their learning processes to achieve career readiness.

Reference [22] examine the impact of participation in the ETTF internship on nutrition knowledge, health career readiness, and professional development. Their research, which utilizes paired samples t-tests to compare career readiness before and after the internship, highlights the value of internships in enhancing students' knowledge and preparedness for their careers.

Reference [23] provide an overview of different experiential learning approaches employed by institutions. They compare the learning objectives and evaluation strategies associated with each type, demonstrating the versatility of experiential learning in addressing various educational and career development needs.

These studies reinforce the importance of experiential learning in enhancing career outcomes. Practical, real-world experiences help students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge, gain confidence, and develop a clearer understanding of their career paths. Educational institutions can use these insights to structure programs and curricula that effectively incorporate experiential learning, better-preparing students for successful transitions into the workforce. Thus, hypothesis 4 was formulated as shown below:

H4: Experiential Learning has Significant Impact on the Career Readiness

### ***2.5 Effects of Social Competency on the Career Readiness***

The studies conducted on career adaptability and its impact on career development provide comprehensive insights into how individuals navigate career-related tasks, transitions, and challenges. This body of research offers valuable information on the predictors of career adaptability, its development patterns, and its relation to career success and individual well-being.

Reference [24] has discussed career adaptability as a psychosocial construct crucial for adjusting to the changing work world and predicting career success. This study has emphasized the positive correlation of career

adaptability with control, social support, self-esteem, career optimism, well-being, and employability skills. It has also highlighted the importance of developing adaptive skills during university years, a crucial period for making future employment decisions.

Reference [25] have explored career adaptability as a crucial competence for career development, emphasizing its role in adapting to changing career circumstances and predicting career advancement. The study has found that work self-efficacy, search for work self-efficacy, and education significantly predict career adaptability, suggesting that these factors are crucial for navigating the current labor market.

Reference [26] have focused on developing career adaptability among college students during the transition from school to work. The study has identified different development patterns of career adaptability and highlighted the positive role of future work selves and core self-evaluation in this process. It has provided implications for enhancing career construction theory and career counseling practice.

Reference [27] have investigated how career adaptability affects job satisfaction and work stress through affective states. The study has revealed that career adaptability leads to higher job satisfaction and lower work stress by reducing negative affect, supporting the concept of career adaptability as a self-regulatory resource.

Reference [28] have analyzed the career biographies of mid-career changers using a career adaptability framework. The study has demonstrated how adaptive adults use both formal and informal learning to develop career adaptability competencies across different occupations, highlighting the utility of this framework for motivating positive career change.

All of these studies emphasize the importance of career adaptability in managing career transitions and achieving career success. Targeted interventions aimed at enhancing career adaptability can facilitate individuals' ability to cope with career changes and challenges, contributing to their overall career development and satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 5 was formulated as shown below:

H5: Social Competency has significance positive impact on Career Readiness

### ***2.6 Effects of Curriculum Alignment on the career readiness***

Curriculum alignment is a crucial concept in education, ensuring that teaching methods, materials, and assessment strategies directly support defined learning outcomes, standards, and students' real-world needs. When curricula are aligned with career readiness goals, educational institutions can effectively prepare students for success in the professional world, ensuring that the imparted skills and knowledge meet real-world employers' expectations and challenges.

Reference [29] have described how three higher education institutions have successfully aligned leadership development with career readiness, highlighting best practices for integrating leadership and career development to enhance college student career readiness. In this way, they underscore the strategic importance of curriculum alignment in fostering critical competencies required in the workforce.

Reference [30] discuss the role of program curriculum alignment in ensuring student success, which is defined as completing their degree, graduating, and securing employment. They advocate for a curriculum design that incorporates both vertical and horizontal dimensions of alignment and emphasize the need for collaboration within and beyond universities to manage the curriculum effectively and ensure it meets the workforce's demands.

Reference [31] tackle the issue of curriculum visibility, arguing that practical problems in higher education often challenge alignment. They propose using a digital curriculum mapping tool to enhance the visibility of learning trajectories across the curriculum, thereby improving alignment and aiding in achieving learning goals.

These studies illustrate the crucial role of curriculum alignment in educational reform. By ensuring that all curriculum components are cohesively structured to meet the evolving demands of the job market, educational institutions can provide students with the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary for a seamless transition into their chosen careers. This dynamic process requires ongoing attention, collaboration, and a deep understanding of educational and industry landscapes to produce a competent and efficient workforce. Thus, hypothesis 6 was formulated as shown below:

H6: Curriculum Alignment has significance positive impact on Career Readiness

### ***2.7 Effect of career decision self-efficacy on career readiness***

Understanding how individuals navigate their career paths and prepare for professional success is closely related to career decision self-efficacy. Various studies have investigated the interplay between career decision self-efficacy and different factors influencing career preparedness.

Reference [32] examines the impact of a structured career development program on university students. According to their findings, the program significantly increased self-efficacy related to career decision-making and career development readiness. This suggests that targeted programs can be effective in enhancing career decision self-efficacy and, as a result, career preparedness.

Reference [33] reviews the development of the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) and its role in understanding the relationships between career self-efficacy, career indecision, and other challenges in career decision-making. This study reinforces the importance of measuring and addressing self-efficacy in career counselling and education to improve career decision-making processes.

Reference [34] study employs meta-analysis to integrate findings from previous studies on career decision self-efficacy and its related variables. The study confirms significant correlations between career decision self-efficacy and self-esteem, vocational identity, and career indecision. It clarifies its role within the social cognitive career theory framework.

Reference [33] study focuses on developing and evaluating a short form of the CDMSE. This study emphasizes the scale's utility in career counselling interventions by providing an efficient tool for assessing career decision



self-efficacy and addressing perceived difficulties.

Reference [35] study examines the mediating role of career decision level in the relationship between academic self-efficacy and career preparation behavior. The study highlights the positive associations between academic self-efficacy, career decision level, and career preparation behavior. This suggests the importance of fostering academic self-efficacy to enhance career readiness.

These studies underscore the significant role of career decision self-efficacy in career preparedness. They highlight the importance of interventions, programs, and counselling that aim to enhance self-efficacy to support individuals in making informed career decisions, establishing clear career goals, and engaging in effective career preparation behaviors. Ultimately, this can impact their career success and satisfaction. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Career decision self-efficacy has significance positive impact on career readiness

### **3. Conclusion**

The examination of career readiness within higher education highlights key factors required to effectively prepare students for the professional world. These factors include internship efficacy, career adaptability, soft skills development, experiential learning, social competency, and curriculum alignment to meet modern workplace demands. The conclusion drawn from this exploration underscores the significant role of each factor in enhancing career readiness and provides valuable insights for educational institutions to foster a holistic approach to student development.

Internship efficacy is a cornerstone in this approach. Offering students practical experience and networking opportunities directly impacts their readiness for the job market. Studies demonstrate the positive influence of high-quality internships and enhanced self-efficacy on students' preparedness for employment.

Career adaptability, as explored through career decision self-efficacy, reveals the necessity of adaptability in managing the dynamic nature of today's job market. This adaptability significantly contributes to adequate career preparation, fueled by motivated learning.

The indispensable role of soft skills development is highlighted by research that shows the benefits of targeted courses in enhancing career self-efficacy. Development of these skills is crucial for success in the workplace, requiring educational curricula to integrate career-centric activities that nurture soft skills.

Experiential learning bridges theoretical knowledge and practical application, enhancing students' work readiness. This hands-on approach is vital for career readiness, emphasizing the need for educational programs to provide real-world learning experiences.

Social competency, linked to career readiness, underscores the importance of effective interpersonal interactions and collaborative capabilities in professional settings. This competency is essential for navigating the

complexities of the modern workplace.

Curriculum alignment ensures that educational content and methodologies are directly relevant to professional standards and industry needs. This alignment is fundamental to equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge for their future careers.

In summary, the interplay of internship efficacy, career adaptability, soft skills development, experiential learning, social competency, and curriculum alignment is indispensable for augmenting career readiness among higher education students. This comprehensive approach, supported by empirical evidence, emphasizes the need for educational institutions to implement holistic strategies to prepare students for the multifaceted challenges of the contemporary professional arena.

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