

SOFT SKILLS TRAINING FOR STUDENTS BEFORE PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERNSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Internships are essential for students because they provide hands-on work experience, enhance skills, and help build professional networks. This allows students to apply the theories learned in class in the real world of work, thus strengthening their understanding and increasing their readiness for future careers. Unfortunately, until now there are still many complaints from companies or agencies that accept interns. In general, companies complain about things related to soft skills. This study aims at answering the questions of This study aims to answer the question of how the soft skills competencies of students who take part in internships are and what should be done to improve the quality of students' soft skills. In this study, researchers did semi structured interviews to 10 students who had participated in internships at companies and government agencies to find out what kind of preparation was provided by the campus before they participated in the internship. Researchers also interviewed 10 Human Resources Managers at the companies to find out how the students' soft skills competencies were during the internship. The result of this study indicates that training of soft skills is very important for universities to provide to students before they take part in internships. This is because soft skills such as communication, collaboration, leadership, and adaptability are very much needed in the world of work and can help students adapt better during internships.

Keywords: *Soft Skills, Training, Internship*

INTRODUCTION

Internship, also known as Work Practice or Internship, is a program of learning and practicing working directly in a company or agency for a certain period of time. This program aims to provide real work experience and improve the skills of students or pupils before entering the world of work full time. According to Sumardiono (in Azwar, 2019), internship is a learning process provided by experts through real-world activities with the process of implementing and solving real problems around. Internship, according to Rusidi (in Azwar, 2019) is also a compulsory course that needs to be completed by students as a way to prepare themselves for real-world activities and become human resources who are ready to work.

Internship activities are basically very important for students to do in order to increase their insight into the business world and the industrial world to improve their expertise and practical work skills. However, according to research by Tyas Sari & Nurhidayati (2022),

the acquisition of knowledge while studying in class has not been able to prepare students to be able to directly face the reality of the world of work. This can be seen when students do internships either in private companies or government agencies. Some universities provide training for their students before doing internships, but many universities do not provide training on the grounds that it is at the internship site that students will really learn about the world of work. However, in reality, this training is considered ineffective because it only explains the internship flow and internship regulations. Therefore, it is not surprising that many companies complain about students who do internships in their companies. In general, students can be said to be skilled in applying the hard skills they have learned on campus. Hard skills are the ability in terms of technical mastery in terms of science and technology. According to Sinarwati in (Budiningsih, 2020), hard skills are abilities in technical matters that are relevant to certain fields of work.

However, this is not the case with soft skills. According to Lucas et al (2018) Soft skills (non-technical interpersonal skills in a social environment) are interpersonal and personal behaviors that will facilitate individuals in the process of developing their potential. In general, students have problems with their soft skills. Many companies complain because students who do internships are not responsive, not sensitive, not communicative, not disciplined because students still think that internships are work training, and not real work. In fact, they forget, it is during the internship that the company will assess their quality which of course will affect the quality of their higher education.

Therefore, soft skills training is very important for students who will take part in internships. Soft skills, such as communication skills, cooperation, leadership, and problem-solving, will help them adapt and succeed in the world of work. This training prepares them to face challenges in the internship and increases their chances of achieving career success in the future. This study aims to answer the questions of This study aims to answer the question of how the soft skills competencies of students who take part in internships are and what should be done to improve the quality of students' soft skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Internship

Definition of internship according to Rosa (Fajri, 2018), "Internship is an activity and program held individually or by an internship program institution that is used as a means of providing a real picture of the world of work. In addition, internship is a means for individuals or institutions to provide learning on how to communicate or how to relate to each other and personnel in a company or organization. "Barlian Winarta (2017), "Internship is a provision for new employees by learning directly with seniors and supervised by experts or specialists. To get the same skills as the master, it takes a relatively long time. "So, internship is an activity carried out by final semester students to understand or learn the job they want before actually entering the world of work.

There are many definitions related to internships presented by experts. Among others is the opinion of Munandar (2013) who stated that work practice activities are to gain experience and develop skills related to a particular field of study or profession. According to Sumardiono (in Azwar, 2019), internships are a learning process provided by experts through real-world activities with the process of implementing and solving real problems around.

In addition to the benefits of gaining work experience, internships also have benefits for students in making decisions about education and career paths after graduation (Tovey, 2001). According to Shoenfelt et al (2013) internships are important as a step towards employability in the first professional position and a portal to long-term career success. Based on the description above, it can be seen the importance of internship programs for students to gain experience and in making decisions after graduation. According to Knouse and Fentenot (2008) one of the benefits of internships for students is that students who have internship experience should have an advantage in the job market, they are ready to be hired for the next job. Confirming this statement, why students with internship experience have a better chance of getting a job offer because students with internship experience have better skills or abilities that are ready to be applied to the real business world. The results of research by Knouse and Fentenot (2008) show that students with internship experience have better skills or abilities that are ready to be applied to the real business world.

Definition of Soft Skills

According to La France (2016), soft skills are defined as "personal and interpersonal behavior that develops and maximizes human performance (e.g. confidence, flexibility, honesty, and integrity)" which means that soft skills are "Personal and interpersonal behavior that develops and maximizes a person's performance related to self-confidence, flexibility, honesty and integrity". In line with the definition above, Elfindri et al. (2011), define soft skills as "skills and life skills, both for oneself, in groups, or in society, and with the Creator". Furthermore, Illah Sailah (2008) argues that soft skills are "a person's skills in relating to others (interpersonal skills) and skills in managing themselves (intra-personal skills) that are able to develop a person's performance to the maximum". The important elements in soft skills, among others, Widhiarso (2009), explains several types of soft skills related to success in the world of work based on research results, are as follows:

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(a) Emotional Intelligence

Through intensive research, Goleman (1998) in Widhiarso (2009) found that a person's success is not only supported by how smart a person is in applying

knowledge and practicing his skills, but also how much a person is able to manage himself and interactions with others. This skill is called emotional intelligence.

- (b) Effective Communication, Cangelosi and Petersen (1998) in Widhiarso (2009) found that many students' failures in school, society and the workplace were due to low communication skills. In addition to communication skills playing a direct role, an indirect role was also found. Indirectly, communication skills affect the level of self-confidence and social support which then continues to influence success.

According to Illah Sailah in the Student Soft Skills Development Guide (2010), based on research conducted by the countries of England, America and Canada, there are 23 soft skills attributes that dominate the workforce. The 23 attributes are ranked based on priority of importance in the world of work, namely: 1) Initiative, 2) Ethics/integrity, 3) Critical thinking, 4) Willingness to learn, 5) Commitment, 6) Motivation, 7) Enthusiastic, 8) Reliable, 9) Oral communication, 10) Creative, 11) Analytical skills, 12) Can cope with stress, 13) Self-management, 14) Solving problems, 15) Can summarize, 16) Competent, 17) Flexible, 18) Teamwork, 19) Independent, 20) Listening, 21) Resilient, 22) Logical argumentation and 23) Time management.

According to Purwandari (2007) soft skills components include:

- a. Work ethic, namely being able to follow instructions given by superiors or supervisors.
- b. Politeness, namely the habit of saying the words: Please, Thank you, and Sorry.
- c. Cooperation, namely the ability to share responsibilities, give to others, commitment to respect, help each other to do tasks, and seek help if needed.
- d. Discipline and self-confidence, namely the ability to organize tasks for better performance, learn from experience, ask and correct mistakes, be able to absorb criticism and instructions without feeling guilty, angry and hateful or feeling insulted.
- e. Adjustment to norms, namely the ability to regulate dress, neatness, body language, tone of voice, and choice of words according to the work culture.
- f. Language skills, namely the ability to speak, read and write standard words.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method. According to Bogdan and Biklen in Sugiyono (2020:7) the descriptive qualitative research method is the collection of data in the form of words or pictures, so it does not emphasize numbers. The data collected after being analyzed is then described so that it is easy for others to understand. Data collection in this study used interview techniques, namely semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured

interviews, according to Creswell (2014), are a type of interview that uses a list of questions that have been designed but still provides researchers with flexibility to develop further questions and follow the responses that arise from the informants.

In this study, researchers interviewed 10 students who had participated in internships at companies and government agencies to find out what kind of preparation was provided by the campus before they participated in the internship. Researchers also interviewed 10 Human Resources Managers at the company to find out how the students' soft skills competencies were during the internship. The data analysis technique in this study used the analysis technique from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), which states that data analysis consists of 3 simultaneous activity flows, namely Data Condensation, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing/Verifications.

a. Data Condensation

Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming data that approximates the whole of written field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials.

b. Data Display Data display is an organization, unification of information that allows for conclusions and action. Data display helps in understanding what is happening and to do something, including deeper analysis or taking action based on understanding.

c. Conclusion Drawing The third important analysis activity is drawing conclusions and verification. From the beginning of data collection, a qualitative analyst begins to search for the meaning of things, noting explanatory regularities, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions.

Below is a picture of the data analysis model from Miles, Huberman and Saldana.

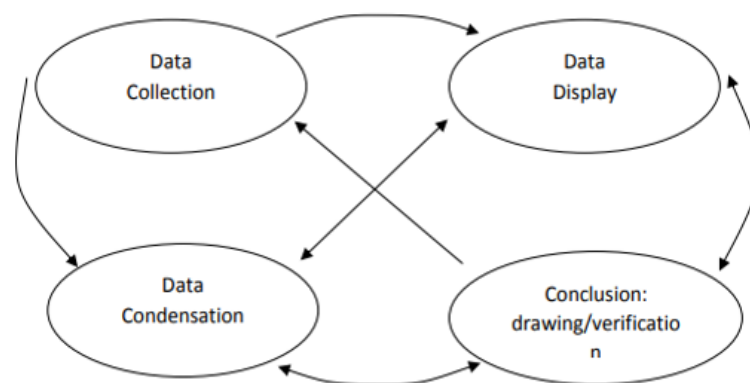


Figure 1
Model of Qualitative Research Analysis of
Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher used the soft skills aspects from Illah Sailah (2010), which were grouped into 4 categories, namely:

No	Aspect	Interviews with HR Managers
1.	Thinking Skills	
	Critical Thinking Skills	In general, students who do internships are still not brave enough to give their opinions. If asked to give input, they seem still afraid and shy.
	Creative Thinking Skills	Students are still not confident in developing their own abilities. This can be seen when doing assignments, in general students do not dare to show their work or their own thoughts.
	Problem Solving Skills	Students are generally less skilled in solving problems. Every time they encounter a problem in their work, whether it is a big or small problem, they only report it to their superiors or supervisors without providing a solution. Interns seem to not want to think about solving their problems or at least providing input to their supervisors or mentors.
2.	Independency	
	a. High willingness to learn	There are many students who have a high willingness to learn. However, there are more students who lack the willingness to learn. They still think that internships are a place for work practice and not real work, so they are not too serious about doing internships.
	b. Excited	Not all of them seem enthusiastic in joining the internship. Most of them are still often late, and ready to go home before the designated time to go home.
	c. Reliable	Only a few of the interns are reliable. In general, interns do not have responsibilities for their work and tasks.
3.	Self Management	

	Time Management	Internship students are generally not yet skilled in time management. They are not yet able to manage their time well, for example, the tasks assigned to them are not completed on time, such as making reports, or other work as stated in their "job description".
	Stress Management	Students also seem unable to handle stress due to work well. If there is a lot of work or it is piling up, interns do not come in because they are sick.
	Appearance	In general, interns still think that they come to the office not to work but only for work practice, as a result they also do not maintain their appearance which should be professional as an employee.
4.	Communication Skills	
	Verbal Communication Skills	Internship students are generally not yet skilled in oral communication. Many of them look stiff, and do not even want to introduce themselves to staff working in the same room. When speaking, they are still lacking in using the right choice of words, so they seem "impolite."
	Attitude and Behavior	Internship students generally do not demonstrate good behavior or do not understand how they should behave in the workplace.
	Able to work in a Team	Many interns are also less able to work together in a team. This can be seen from their attitude when working with their team. The selfish nature is still clearly visible. Not wanting to accept input from their friends.
<p>Suggestions from HR Managers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1. Universities must provide training related to soft skills for their students. 2. 2. Soft skills are closely related to character, personality and ethics. It is the task of educational institutions to educate their students to have good character and personality and not all of it is the responsibility of the company. 3. 3. The task of mentors/supervisors in companies is more emphasized on teaching things related to work procedures, no longer educating students to have good character and personality. 		

The results of the interview with the HRD manager above show that there are still many interns who are not ready to enter the workforce. Of the 4 (four) categories, namely: Thinking skills, Independence, Self-Management and Communication skills, it turns out that most students do not have the ability to understand soft skills, even though these

four categories of soft skills are determinants of the success and quality of a prospective employee. Problem solving, communication, ethics, and thinking skills are indeed important factors that determine the success of a prospective employee or employee. These four factors are very much needed in the world of work because they help individuals to work effectively and efficiently, can build good relationships, and achieve professional goals.

This is in line with what Illah Sailah (2010) stated regarding the importance of communication ethics. Communication ethics include verbal communication and nonverbal communication. According to Abdul Samad Arief, et al. (2021) in the book *Basics of Business Communication*, ethics are principles for regulating behavior in society. While communication is a relationship of interaction between humans, in the form of sending and receiving messages. So, communication ethics can be interpreted as principles that regulate the relationship of interaction between humans. Communication ethics can also be interpreted as norms, values, and behavior in establishing communication.

Likewise, the self-management aspect is an important aspect that determines the quality of internship students. The ability to manage oneself, both in terms of time, emotions, tasks, and resources, plays a major role in the success of an internship, as stated by Sirois & Pychyl (2013) who found that strong self-management skills are associated with decreased stress levels and increased psychological well-being.

Meanwhile, the aspect of thinking ability is also an important aspect that must be possessed by every student who will take part in an internship, especially critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Internship programs help students develop soft skills, including critical thinking skills, which are highly needed by employers. The parameters of critical thinking skills in learners can be measured by several components or aspects as important assessment criteria for learners (Zubaidah and Aloysius 2015). As the five aspects of critical thinking proposed (Norris and Ennis 1989) include:

1. Elementary clarification: Providing simple explanations by focusing on questions, analyzing arguments, asking and answering questions that require explanation or challenge.
2. Basic support: Building basic skills by considering the credibility of sources and considering observations.
3. Inference: Drawing conclusions by compiling and considering deductions, compiling and considering inductions, compiling decisions and considering the results.
4. Advanced clarification: Providing further explanations by identifying terms and considering definitions, and identifying assumptions.
5. Strategies and tactics: Determining an action and interacting with others.

Creative thinking ability is the ability to generate new ideas, creative solutions to problems, and create something valuable in a different and new way. Along with technological advances and people's expectations to be more creative, creative thinking ability is becoming increasingly important in many fields of work. According to Treffinger (2005), there are five aspects that are parameters of creative thinking ability that must be possessed by each individual to be able to think creatively effectively. The five aspects of creativity are:

1. Fluency: The ability to generate many ideas in a short period of time.
2. Flexibility: The ability to see problems from multiple perspectives and consider many types of solutions.
3. Elaboration: The ability to develop ideas into more detailed and concrete ideas.
4. Originality: The ability to generate unique and novel ideas.
5. Metaphorical thinking: Refers to the ability to use comparisons or analogies to make new connections.

The last is the aspect of independence. The aspect of independence is very important to prepare before doing an internship. Independence helps someone to be more prepared to face challenges and responsibilities during an internship. Many interns do not yet have independence. A person's attitude that shows that he does not have independence is when doing something, he is always plagued by doubt, easily anxious, unsure, tends to avoid, has no initiative, is easily discouraged, does not dare to appear in front of many people and other psychological symptoms that hinder him from doing something (Thursah Hakim, 2005: 4).

Meanwhile, the results of interviews with students who have participated in internships provide information that not all campuses provide provisions for their students for internships, even the campus has the perspective that the internship itself is a place where students will be trained to be able to work professionally. But unfortunately, the campus does not think that during the internship students will be assessed by the company where the results of the assessment of student competence and quality will be one of the benchmarks of the university's reputation.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that training related to soft skills before students take part in internships is a program that must be run by every university. Training of soft skills is very important for universities to provide to students before they take part in internships. This is because soft skills such as communication, collaboration, leadership, and adaptability are very much needed in the world of work and can help students adapt better during internships. For further research, the researcher suggests that research be conducted

related to the provision model for students before taking part in training with a different approach.

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