



## Shaping The Future of Work Readiness of Internship Students : Role of Gen Z's Resilience

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the role of resilience on work readiness in MBKM (*Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka*) internship students. Non-experimental correlational study design was used. A quantitative approach through regression and descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze the collected data. Non-probability sampling, specifically the convenience sampling, was also used. Data collection was carried out through an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The respondents consisted of 140 students from a university in West Java who had participated in the MBKM internship program. The Resilience Quotient Test (RQ-Test) and Work Readiness Scale (WRS) were used to measure resilience and work readiness, respectively. The result of this study showed that resilience had a significant role on work readiness ( $r^2 = 0.285$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This study is expected to present information and contribute theoretically towards resilience and its role towards work readiness in MBKM internship students. The result of this study can be used by students that participate in the internship program to evaluate themselves and to show them the importance of developing resilience for their work readiness in the future.

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## Introduction

According to Statistics Indonesia, Generation Z (Gen Z) consists of people that were born between the year 1997–2012, currently aged around 12–23 years old. Gen Zs are a group with a high potential of being vulnerable in the workplace (Wu, Qu, Zhang, Hao, Tang, Zhao, & Si, 2019). This is because of the perception that previous generations have about Gen Zs that they are not capable enough to handle workplace challenges and are unreliable (Henry, 2020). Currently, most Gen Zs are in the emerging adulthood development stage, where they have just finished their time in college around 2–3 years ago or are currently in the final years of college. In addition, they are also in the stage where they are exploring their identities and making changes for a positive future and life (Santrock, 2018).

Gen Zs are currently exploring many aspects, trying many new alternatives, and experiencing many activities. One activity in particular that college students chose is internship. Internship is defined as a short period of time for practical work experience, where students gain valuable work experiences in certain fields or potential career of interests (Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). In addition to giving many significant benefits for students in terms of work readiness and income, internships also strengthen students' confidence and self-satisfaction in the lifelong learning process (Karunaratne et al., 2019). Internship could enhance skills such as critical thinking, work capabilities, communication, self-confidence, professional core competence, and time management (Chiu, 2012 as written in Mensah et al., 2020).



Indonesia currently has a certain education policy, which is the Merdeka Belajar - Kampus Merdeka (Freedom to Learn - Freedom Campus/MBKM). One of the programs of the MBKM policy is Certified Internship. This program enables students to gain work experience in the industry or real professional world for 1–2 semesters. Students will gain knowledge about best practices for their industry and field of interest. Students will also gain both hard skills and soft skills that will be useful for their career preparation and for entering professional work in the near future. The program gave opportunities for students to develop their skills so they are able to face the challenges in the professional world, including changes in work competencies that have to be mastered. Students will gain experience in facing real problems in the workplace (Kampus Merdeka, n.d.).

However, different students will gain different levels of experience and knowledge depending on the place of internship, chosen position, and the assigned work tasks. It should be noted that not all of the experience gained from an internship will result in positive outcomes and working experiences (Holyoak, 2013 as cited in Zehr et al., 2020). Students who participate in the MBKM internship program will face a new stage of life caused by entering the real professional world, where they have to face many new challenges and adversities. Students will become a part of a team and actively participate in a work project. Unlike conventional internship programs, the MBKM program demands that the students work full-time, as an employee would, for the whole 5–6 months. The program has quite a structured manual regarding the program's grading and learning outcomes. During the internship, a mentor/supervisor will observe the students and give direct feedback. The mentor/supervisor will give an initial and final assessment based on the grading guidelines. The mentor/supervisor will also observe and write a monthly progress report regarding the students' skills/abilities and performance during the internship. In addition to the mentor/supervisor, the academic supervisor will evaluate and grade the students' internship outcomes. The outcomes of the internship will be converted into 20 college credits in the form of competencies, both technical and non-technical, that the students gained during the internship. This grading will affect the internship process, where the students are obligated to participate in the internship to the best of their abilities. In addition, students are obligated to meet both weekly and monthly targets, assigned by the place of internship (Kampus Merdeka, n.d.).

The internship students are faced with a very different situation than their usual activities as college students. During the internship, students will work as if they are full-time employees of the company. Students will experience real professional world problems or industry projects that have real consequences towards the company's performance (Kampus Merdeka, n.d.). This change from their daily lives during the internship could be perceived as being challenging by the students. A preliminary study was conducted on five MBKM internship students to support this claim. The participants stated that they experienced difficulties during their time in an internship, such as adjusting to new environments, difficulty in understanding the workflow, and heavy workloads. The students also reported that they feel scared and anxious facing work situations that they have never faced before.

It is important for students, especially for Gen Zs with all of the stigma and their unique characteristics, to strengthen their ability in self-adjustment and resilience in the workplace. Resilience is the ability to endure and adjust when faced with situations that are not within expectations (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Resilience refers to the personal qualities and social resources that positively affect the detrimental results (Connor & Davidson, 2013 as cited in Yildirim et al., 2020). Resilience is an individual's ability to actively and positively



respond to life conditions, stress, and trauma so that they are able to bounce back and move forward in life with positive action (Huang & Lin, 2013). Generation Z exhibited lower resilience compared to Generation X (Harari et al., 2023). This aligns with other research indicating that younger individuals tend to be less resilient than their older counterparts (Cohen et al., 2016; Ludwig et al., 2020; Gooding et al., 2012). According to Reivich & Shatte (2002), there are seven factors to building resilience, which are emotion regulation, reaching out, self-efficacy, empathy, causal analysis, realistic optimism, and impulse control.

A resilient individual can turn their adversities into a growth experience and perceive it as a new way to do work and move forward (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2005 as cited in Warner & April 2012). Resilience is crucial for MBKM internship students during their internship so they can focus and be productive. Resilience also helps students to face possible changes in work, such as new responsibilities, management, technological development, and new organizational strategies (Warner & April 2012). With good resilience, students will be able to solve adversities, changes, or other work challenges that might happen during their time in the internship. Based on the preliminary study, resilience helped the students to be more productive and flexible, increased their work motivation, and increased their motivation to study new things during their time in the internship. This, in turn, enabled the students to develop abilities as much as they could during their time in internship in preparation for their career shortly. In other words, resilience helps students to become more prepared to enter professional work after they graduate.

Work readiness is the degree to which a fresh graduate is considered to have the necessary attitude and attributes to be successful in the workplace (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Work readiness is a relatively new concept that became a criterion to predict fresh graduates' potential in a job selection process (ACNielsen Research Services, 2000; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Gardner & Liu, 1997; Hart, 2008 as cited in Caballero et al., 2011). In a study conducted by Kapareliotis et al. (2019) to adapt the concept of consumer readiness to work readiness, they found that work readiness consists of three key aspects, which are role clarity (the state in which students are more aware of what they have to prioritize), motivation, and ability. There are four factors to identify the attributes and characteristics of work readiness (Caballero et al., 2011), which are personal characteristics, organizational acumen, work competence, and social intelligence. Work readiness is important for fresh graduates because it is an aspect that is highly sought out by employers and could influence being successful at work (Cavanagh et al., 2015). In addition, work readiness could be used as an indicator for students to assess themselves on how the internship shaped their readiness for work. By participating in the internship program, students are already well-prepared to adjust to the workplace (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). Students are able to identify their needs to finish work tasks, have good performance in the workplace, and feel more confident in using the abilities/competencies that they have. Based on the preliminary study for this study, MBKM internship students reported that they received benefits for participating in the internship, such as being more flexible so that they are able to adjust to change, acquiring new knowledge in terms of working at a company, experience the real professional world, enhanced several skills, networking, and apply theories that they learned in class directly. These benefits will help the students to be more prepared to enter the professional world.

Resilience is an antecedent for work readiness and a factor to increase one's work readiness. It is important for one, especially students, to be resilient in the workplace where there are many changes and developments. Resilience will have a positive influence on



students' work readiness development (Lau et al., 2019). While there have been many previous studies regarding resilience and work readiness separately, there have not been a lot of studies that combine the two aspects in the context of internship students, especially Gen Z students.

This study aims to gather empirical evidence of the role that resilience has towards work readiness in MBKM internship students. This study is expected to present information and contribute theoretically towards resilience and its role in work readiness in students who participated in MBKM internship program. This study could be used by students who participated in the internship program to evaluate themselves and to show them the importance of developing resilience for their work readiness in the future. In addition, the outcomes of this study could be used as a consideration as a basis for future studies regarding internship students, especially MBKM internship students.

### **Research Method**

This study used a quantitative approach in which data was collected and presented in the form of numerics which were then analyzed using statistical analysis (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2017). The design used in this study was a correlational study, which measures the degree of relationship between two variables and has had ability to predict one variable to another (Christensen et al., 2014). Active Universitas Padjadjaran students who participated in the MBKM internship program were used as the population of this study. Non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling, was used to sample the population, where the researcher asked a group of people to voluntarily participate in the study due to the availability and ease of access to participate in the study (Christensen, 2015). The number of respondents that participated in this study was initially 176 respondents. However, based on the inclusion criteria, the final number of respondents that were used in the analysis was 140 respondents. Resilience was measured using the Resilience Quotient Test (RQ-Test) which was initially developed by Reivich & Shatte (2002) and then adapted into Indonesian by Wedyaswari (2019). Work readiness was measured using the Work Readiness Scale that has been adapted into Indonesian by Sagita et al. (2020) based on the work readiness concept by Caballero & Walker (2010). In addition, demographics and additional data were collected to enrich the findings of the study. The demographics consisted of gender and age, while the additional data consisted of a field of major, GPA, and organizational experience.

The RQ-Test consisted of 56 items with seven domains that were based on the resilience ability by Reivich & Shatte (2002), which are emotion regulation, impulse control, realistic optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out. Each domain consists of eight items (four favorable items and four unfavorable items with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The scale's scores were obtained by averaging the items and then grouping them into three categories (low, medium, or high). The scale's reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which showed that the scale has an Alpha of 0.869, which means that the scale is reliable (Guilford, 1956). Validity evidence was obtained by using content validity, where the scale is reviewed by three psychologists who have practical experience and have conducted a study about resilience. The review produced a CVI of 1.00, which means that the scale is valid and is able to measure resilience. The Work Readiness Scale consists of 49 items from four domains, with 7 items in the personal characteristic domain, 17 items in the organizational acumen domain, 15 in the work competence item, and the remaining 10 in the social intelligence domain. The scale also includes a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 6 = Strongly Agree). The score was



obtained by averaging the items. Based on the scale manual, the score is then grouped into four ready categories, tends to be ready, tends to be not ready, and not ready. The scale's reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha that showed a score of 0.884, which means that the scale is reliable (Guilford, 1956). Validity evidence was obtained by using content validity, where the adapted scale was reviewed by expert panelists. In addition, validity evidence was obtained through construct validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results showed that the scale met the requirement of three Goodness of Fit Indices, which are CFI (1.00), RMSEA (0.00), and SRMR (0.043; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hooper et al., 2008; Kline, 2016). The scale is valid and is able to measure work readiness.

The data was collected through an online questionnaire and was spread through social media. The questionnaire consisted of five parts, which are informed consent, demographics, additional data, the RQ-Test, and the Work Readiness Scale. The collected data was analyzed using IBM SPSS version 26 and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the demographics, additional data, and the general description of the studied variables. Next, the variables were analyzed using correlation analysis to identify the relationship between the variables. A regression test was then used to identify the role that resilience has in work readiness. In addition, t-tests were conducted to identify whether there were any significant differences between the variables based on the demographics and additional data.

## Results and Discussion

The number of respondents that participated in this study was initially 176 respondents. However, based on the inclusion criteria, the final number of respondents that were used in the analysis was 140 respondents.

**Table 1. Respondent Demographics**

Category	Characteristics	n (N = 140)	%
Gender	Male	49	35
	Female	91	65
Age (years old)	20	19	13.6
	21	67	47.9
	22	47	33.6
	23	6	4.3
	24	1	0.7
Field of Major	STEM	41	29.3
	Social and Humanities	99	70.7
GPA	2.76–3.50	14	10
	3.51–4.00	126	90
Organizational	Yes	139	99.3



Category	Characteristics	n (N = 140)	%
Experience	No	1	0.7

Table 1 showed that most of the respondents are female (65%), aged 21 years old (47.9%), majoring in social and humanities field (70.7%), have a GPA between 3.51–4.00 (90%), and have organizational experience during their time in college (99.3%).

**Table 2. Resilience Descriptive Outcomes**

Variable/Domains	Min	Max	Mean	SD
<b>Resilience</b>	2.73	4.52	3.54	0.35
Emotion Regulation	1.75	4.88	3.54	0.55
Impulse Control	2.75	4.88	3.80	0.46
Realistic Optimism	2.25	4.63	3.41	0.42
Causal Analysis	2.50	4.63	3.55	0.42
Empathy	2.13	4.63	3.53	0.55
Self-Efficacy	2.38	4.88	3.40	0.50
Reaching Out	2.13	4.75	3.57	0.50

Table 2 showed that the mean score for resilience was 3.54 (SD = 0.35), with the impulse control domain having the highest mean (3.80; SD = 0.46). Impulse control is one's ability to control the impulse that they have internally so that they are able to take the right action when under pressure (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). The highest mean score indicated that students have a good ability to take the right action when they are under pressure. During their internship, students may feel pressure when they receive difficult tasks, or responsibilities in a big project, or when they face difficulties in adjusting to the work culture and pace in the workplace. Low impulse control will lead to taking action based on the initial belief, which often leads to negative consequences (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Based on these results, it could be concluded that MBKM internship students are able to control themselves based on the situation that they face during the internship. Meanwhile, the self-efficacy domain has the lowest mean when compared to the other domains (3.40; SD = 0.5). Self-efficacy relates to the degree to which one feels that they are capable, competent, and effective in doing certain tasks (Bandura, 1997). Despite being the lowest, the score showed that most of the students are quite confident in their ability to participate in activities during their time in internship, such as task completion.

**Table 3. Respondents' Resilience Categories**

Variable	Categories	n (N = 140)	%
Resilience	Medium	92	65.7
	High	48	34.3

Table 3 showed that most of the respondents reported that they have medium resilience, while the remaining 48 respondents (34.3%) reported themselves as having high resilience.



Low to medium resilience is related to one’s psychological state of facing medium or heavy stress (Haddadi & Besharat, 2010). Based on previous research, the anxiety faced by Gen Z stems from their relative vulnerability as they enter the workforce. This is further exacerbated by the post-Covid-19 conditions, which suggest that Gen Z feels more vulnerable than older generations (Harari et al., 2023). It could be said that the internship students are currently under quite heavy stress due to the new situation that they faced in the internship. The new situation includes adjusting to the workplace, where students are demanded to understand the culture, rules, workflow, and group dynamics in the workplace. The internship students have to adjust to their new roles and responsibilities and collaborate with other people from various backgrounds. Medium resilience could also indicate that the students are quite capable of surviving and facing many challenges and demands during their time in the internship. The students are still able to ask questions, learn when they are unsure about something, and evaluate themselves when they receive feedback from their superiors or other coworkers regarding their performance or outcomes. This is supported by one of the learning characteristics in the workplace, especially for internship students, which is trial and error (Zehr & Korte, 2020). In addition, internship students are guided and supervised by their mentor/supervisor during their internship, which should help the students to face challenges and new changes in the workplace.

**Table 4. Work Readiness Descriptives Outcomes**

Variable/Domains	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Work Readiness	4.24	5.96	5.24	0.34
Personal Characteristic	3.57	6.00	5.17	0.49
Organizational Acumen	4.47	6.00	5.35	0.36
Work Competence	3.80	6.00	5.13	0.45
Social Intelligence	4.10	6.00	5.28	0.41

Table 4 shows that the mean score for work readiness is 5.24 (SD = 0.34), with organizational acumen having the highest mean score compared to other domains (5.35; SD = 0.36). Organizational acumen is the knowledge of the organization and the awareness of its protocol and practice in the workplace (Caballero & Walker, 2010). The score indicated that MBKM internship students have good knowledge about their workplace and awareness of its rules, culture, environment, and how to behave appropriately when they are working. Meanwhile, work competence has the lowest mean score compared to other domains (5.13; SD = 0.45). Work competence includes organizational skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and the ability to innovate (Caballero & Walker, 2011). Work competence also includes specific skills that one needs based on their field of work (Orr et al., 2023). This domain relates to how students learn and develop their work competence during their internship based on their job position or division, such as technical skills and knowledge. When compared to other domains, the lower mean score could be caused by the students still learning and adjusting themselves in their workplace and that they are still not used to be in the professional world.



**Table 5. Respondents' Work Readiness Categories**

Variable	Categories	n (N = 140)	%
Work Readiness	Tends to be ready	13	9.3
	Ready	127	90.7

Table 5 shows that most of the respondents are in the ready category ( $n = 127$ ), while the remaining respondents are in the tends-to-be ready category. The results indicated that most of the MBKM internship students have high work readiness. This is supported by previous research by Utami (2020) that found that internships have a significant role in work readiness in internship students, where the acquired skills and experiences from the internship could motivate the students to prepare themselves more adequately and compete in the job market for their future careers. Pang et al. (2021) also found that internship is important because it helps students understand their strengths and limitations, identify necessary skills, and learn about how to adjust themselves for their dream careers. In other words, work readiness is increased because students participated in the internship.

Assumption tests were done before the regression tests. Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, it was found that the data were normally distributed ( $p = 0.200$ ;  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). A linearity test was also done, which found that the correlation between the independent and dependent variables is linear ( $p = 0.590$ ;  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). Finally, based on the Glejser heteroscedasticity test, it was found that the data do not indicate heteroscedasticity ( $p = 0.099$ ;  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ).

**Table 6. Resilience and Work Readiness Correlation Test Outcomes**

Variables	r	p-value	p-value note	r note
Resilience – Work Readiness	0.534	0.000	There is a significant correlation	Medium correlation power

Table 6 showed that there is a significant correlation between resilience and work readiness ( $r = 0.534$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ), with medium correlation power based on the correlation criteria by Guilford (1956).

**Table 7. Simple Linear Regression Test Outcomes**

Regression Model	B	R-squared	t	p-value
Resilience – Work Readiness	0.549	0.285	7.425	0.000

Table 7 showed that resilience has a significant effect towards work readiness ( $t = 7.425$ ;  $p\text{-value} < 0.005$ ), with a R-squared value of 0.285. The value indicated that resilience contributed 28.5% towards the change in work readiness. The results indicated that resilience has a significant effect towards work readiness in MBKM internship students. This finding supports previous study that found that resilience precedes work readiness and could influence work readiness. The more resilient one is in facing obstacles, changes, and uncertainties in the workplace, the higher the chance that resilience contributed positively towards one's work readiness development (Lau et al., 2019). In the context of this study,



resilient internship students are able to solve problems during their internship, which would make them more prepared to enter the professional world after they graduate. This resilience is shown in the way that students face adversities during their internship, such as adjustments, new responsibilities, challenges in understanding the workflow, and being overwhelmed with their work.

Resilience is needed to face adjustment problems, where internship students are demanded to be able to adjust themselves in the workplace. Previous studies found that there is a positive correlation between high resilience and the ability to adjust to changes more adequately and flexibly, such as adjusting to organizational change (Waugh et al., 2011; Dong et al., 2013). Based on the findings of this study, the students have medium resilience which means that the experience that they gained during the internship made them quite capable of facing future changes and situations in the workplace. In addition, resilience is an important attribute for fresh graduates to have so that they are able to face challenges in their career (Pool et al., 2019). Hence, the resilience that students have will help them to adjust in their workplace and help them to decide on a career after they graduate.

Other adversities that internship students face include new responsibilities, difficulties in understanding the workflow, and feeling overwhelmed by work. Students are faced with new situations where they have to be responsible for a job or project and work full-time as if they are employees of the company. Students who face this situation for the first time will also face times of confusion with their work and feel overwhelmed by the workload. Previous studies showed that resilience will influence the stress response, facing a difficult workplace, and productivity. Individuals with high resilience will have better performance, regardless of their working conditions (Shatte et al., 2017). In addition, resilient individuals can maintain their effort and performance to finish their work. In the context of this study, resilience will help students to have higher productivity and to show their best work performance and outcomes even though they are in a new environment where they have to adjust themselves. This would reflect on the students' work readiness and their contribution to their future careers.

It is assumed that the student's ability to face adversities in the workplace will translate into them gaining positive work experience. Students will receive positive experiences and perspectives about the real working conditions which would help them to be more prepared to face the real professional world after they graduate. This is also supported by the additional data, where most of the respondents reported that their MBKM internship was mostly positive and they gained many things, such as acquiring new knowledge, professional working experience, relations, new perspectives about the professional world, and a better understanding of workflow and workload. In addition, the students' ability to face adversities during their internship would enable them to successfully face adversities in their future work. The process of facing adversities will help increase the ability to face future adversities (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). The experience of facing adversities in the workplace promotes growth, where individuals acquire new knowledge, skills, or competencies (Cazz & Milton, 2011). In other words, the experience that internship students gained will help them to acquire new knowledge, skills, and even solutions for problems in the workplace. If this ability to face problems is maintained or developed, it could make the students more prepared for work in the future.

The results of this study can increase awareness and could be used by internship students to evaluate themselves about the importance of resilience for future work preparation. The resilience that students build from the internship program allows them to



successfully overcome the challenges that will be faced in the professional world in the future. Based on this study, internship students can increase self-efficacy, which is the extent to which they feel capable and competent when doing a job or task. The result of this study can also contribute theoretically regarding the concepts of resilience, work readiness, and the influence of resilience on work readiness in MBKM internship students.

## Conclusion

Several conclusions could be made based on the findings of this study. First, resilience has a significant role in work readiness in MBKM internship students and most respondents have medium resilience. This showed that as part of Generation Z, the students have the ability to survive, adjust, and face many adversities and demands during their internship. This resilience could still be developed. Second, most of the respondents have high work readiness, which means that the students understand characteristics that are related to the internship, have knowledge and awareness of the protocols and their practice in the workplace, have relevant competencies, and have the necessary social skills to interact in the workplace.

## Recommendation

There are several recommendations that can be considered for future studies. First, future studies could consider a more specific population, such as internship students in a particular company or organization. This could help to describe the internship experience more specifically which, in turn, more specifically describes the resilience and work readiness. Second, future studies could consider other variables of interest that could act as a mediator between resilience and work readiness so it could give a better illustration of the psychological process of the relationship between resilience and work readiness in MBKM internship students, such as the type of social support. As for students, we recommend them to maintain/increase their resilience by developing the seven factors for resilience, which are emotional regulation, self-control when they are under pressure, optimistic about the future, increase problem solving abilities, empathy towards others, have strong believe about their abilities, and try to find new opportunities and relations. This is important especially for internship students because of the effect that resilience has towards work readiness.

As for lecturers, they can consider to arrange workshops or mentoring programs that focus on increasing internship students' resilience especially in preparation for professional work in the future, such as involving alumni and professionals in several different fields of work with the aim of sharing and helping students to face challenges during internship. Lecturers can also create surveys and feedback to assess students' resilience during internship program and identify domains that need development. For policy makers, they can consider to develop a system that can monitor and evaluate students' ability to face challenges during internships and how it affects work readiness. In addition, policy makers or stakeholders can also develop standards or guidelines for internship programs that include factors that support students' resilience.

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