



Bridging Higher Education and Employment: The Role of Talent Management, Knowledge Management, and Self-Efficacy in Students' Work Readiness

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the structural relationships among talent management, knowledge management, self-efficacy, and work readiness among undergraduate students at Lambung Mangkurat University, Indonesia. Using a cross-sectional quantitative approach, data were collected from 350 students through simple random sampling. The research instrument initially consisted of 42 items, of which 31 were retained following validity and reliability testing. The items were measured using a Likert scale. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. All six hypothesized relationships were statistically significant. Among the predictors, knowledge management demonstrated the strongest direct relationship with work readiness, with an R^2 value of 0.68, while talent management and self-efficacy also made significant contributions. Notably, talent management played a foundational role by positively predicting both self-efficacy and knowledge management, while self-efficacy also positively predicted knowledge management. Overall, the findings indicate that students' work readiness is associated with structured talent development at the institutional level, individual knowledge management practices, and confidence in their capabilities, with knowledge management emerging as the strongest predictor of work readiness.

Article History

Received: 08-07-2026

Revised: 16-08-2026

Accepted: 14-09-2026

Published: 20-10-2026

Key Words:

Work Readiness; Talent Management; Knowledge Management; Self-Efficacy.

How to Cite: Akbar, M. A. A. A., Silitonga, E. M. T. M., Azizah Akbariani Ahmad, Utama Ahmed Dima, & Muhammad Meidy Nur Hafidz. (2026). Bridging Higher Education and Employment: The Role of Talent Management, Knowledge Management, and Self-Efficacy in Students' Work Readiness. *Jurnal Paedagogy*, 13(4), 1342-1352. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v13i4.21779>



<https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v13i4.21779>

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Introduction

Based on the Global Risks Report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), findings from the Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) 2025 indicate that the most significant risk in Indonesia for the 2026–2028 period is unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2026). When analyzed by educational attainment, the overall pattern of unemployment in January 2025 remains relatively similar to that of January 2024, except bachelor's degree graduates, whose unemployment rate increased by 0.14%. This trend suggests that university graduates faced greater challenges in securing employment in 2025 compared to 2024. Such an increase may not only be attributed to limited job availability but also to the insufficient preparedness of graduates for entering the workforce.

Studies on work readiness (WR) have revealed a gap between graduates and employers, indicating that many graduates entering the workforce do not meet the level of preparedness expected by employers. (Ng, 2022). Based on data from (Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2026), South Kalimantan had a total of 106,473 students from public and private universities in 2025. As emerging markets undergo rapid social and economic transformation,



it becomes increasingly essential to equip graduates with relevant skills and the competencies needed to be ready for the workforce (Ng, 2022).

In the era of globalization and intensifying competition, talent within organizations is not only a crucial pillar but also a primary driver in achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Dewi, Soegiarto, & Soekiman, 2024). On the other hand, the findings reported by (Fatikhah & Andriani, 2024) offers that there is a positive influence of knowledge management (KM) on career development.

Current academic discourse by Richard Florida defines talent as a combination of abilities, knowledge, skills, and creative intelligence that enables individuals or communities to achieve high performance in a knowledge-based economy (Dewi, Soegiarto, & Soekiman, 2024). Talent is often associated with the concept of human resources and its role in driving economic growth and innovation (Dewi, Soegiarto, & Soekiman, 2024). Talent management (TM) is a critical component of organizational management, involving the identification and effective utilization of skilled individuals within a company. Selecting the right talent enables organizations to build strong, high-performing teams, thereby establishing a solid foundation for achieving strategic objectives (Dewi, Soegiarto, & Soekiman, 2024). To date, relatively few studies have explored how (TM), knowledge management, and career-related self-efficacy (SE) simultaneously relate to work readiness, particularly among students in South Kalimantan.

Research suggests that knowledge management (KM) plays a meaningful role in shaping graduates' career trajectories, yet there is still limited consensus on how effectively universities have been in translating these practices into tangible workplace preparedness (Raut S., Alon, Rana, & Kathuria, 2024). It has also been argued that embedding industry-relevant learning experiences throughout the stages of academic study can help close the gap between what students learn in the classroom and what employers actually expect from new entrants to the labour market (Raut S., Alon, Rana, & Kathuria, 2024).

Self-efficacy, as conceptualised within social cognitive theory, captures how strongly individuals believe in their own capacity to carry out tasks by drawing on what they know, what they can do, and what they have previously experienced. A high level of self-efficacy fosters confidence in achieving success by encouraging individuals to maximize their capabilities, exert greater effort, and effectively utilize their competencies. As such, self-efficacy is considered a key determinant of success (MS, Hery, & Rahmiyati, 2020). An individual's decision to develop their abilities by overcoming varying levels of task difficulty, strengthening their confidence, and mastering work across different situations can simultaneously influence their level of work readiness.

Self-efficacy helps the readiness of fresh graduates in their upcoming career (Ramadani & Muhid, 2022). However, findings from another study indicate that self-efficacy does not have a significant effect on students' work readiness (Violinda, Wahyuningsih, & Meiriyanti, 2023). These different findings show that work readiness may not only depend on students' confidence, but also on other supporting factors. Therefore, this study includes talent management and knowledge management in the model. Talent management represents how universities support student development through mentoring, competency development, and career preparation, while knowledge management reflects how students acquire, share, and apply knowledge during their learning process. By including these variables, this study aims to provide a broader explanation of the factors that influence students' work readiness.

Work readiness (WR) is developed through the combination of educational processes and practical experience gained by students. During their academic journey, the knowledge



they acquire serves as an initial foundation for entering the workforce. Meanwhile, experiences obtained through internships or fieldwork play a significant role in enhancing their overall readiness for work (MS, Hery, & Rahmiyati, 2020).

This study try to identify the importance factor that effect work, this research also aims to examine a little bit further the factors that may affect it. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the influence of talent management, knowledge management, and self-efficacy on the work readiness of students at Lambung Mangkurat University. While also trying to identify talent management as a strategic organizational mechanism that plays a significant role in influencing knowledge management and self-efficacy within high-performance educational environments and also the influence self-efficacy have to knowledge management itself.

Research Method

This study used a quantitative research method with a cross-sectional survey design. The respondents were 350 undergraduate students in Banjarmasin who were actively registered at Lambung Mangkurat University. The sample was selected using a random sampling approach to obtain responses from students with different backgrounds, experiences, and levels of work readiness. Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. The instrument measured four main variables, namely talent management, knowledge management, self-efficacy, and work readiness. The collected data were then analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 to test the validity, reliability, and relationships among the variables.

The questionnaire initially consisted of 42 items measuring talent management, knowledge management, self-efficacy, and work readiness. After the measurement model assessment in PLS-SEM, 31 items met the validity and reliability criteria and were retained for further analysis. The items were drawn and adapted from established, previously validated instruments: self-efficacy items were based on (Mammadov & Wald, 2025); talent management items were adapted from (Evans, Pucik, Stahl, & Bjorkman, 2025); knowledge management items were sourced from (Takeuchi & Shibata, 2006); and work readiness items were adapted from (Barbosa, Carrasco, & Abarca, 2022). All items subsequently underwent validity and reliability testing within the PLS-SEM framework.

The self-efficacy instrument contains 7 items from (Mammadov & Wald, 2025), capturing two core dimensions of self-efficacy: (1) the ability to set a clear direction for one's work (e.g., "I can see the path I need to take in order to meaningfully improve my effectiveness"), and (2) the capacity to push through difficulties and resource constraints (e.g., "I can collaborate with peers to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of our progress").

In the realm of Talent Management, a set of 10 items evaluates various Talent Management dimensions and factor. These include: (1) Profit with purpose at the core (e.g., "My academic/internship program integrates social and environmental sustainability into its core training and development activities"), (2) Building capabilities (e.g., "My current work environment provides me with the specific competencies and behaviors necessary for success in my future career. "), (3) Balancing dualistic tensions (e.g., " I feel my program recognizes and develops the talents of all students, not just a small group of high-achieving students"), (4) Nurturing alignment & differentiation (eg., "I receive clear and consistent messages about



how my performance is evaluated and how my career can progress”), and (5) Ensuring shared responsibility (eg., “I feel that I share responsibility for my professional growth together with my instructors and mentors”) . This framework allows students to reflect on how their feel their collage experience in a way of talent management (Evans, Pucik, Stahl, & Bjorkman, 2025).

Knowledge management was assessed using 11 items covering five dimensions: (1) Socialisation capturing peer-based learning (e.g., "I take part in group discussions to pick up practical skills directly from my classmates"); (2) Externalisation reflecting the ability to articulate and share ideas (e.g., "I use analogies or comparisons to help others understand my thinking during group tasks"); (3) Combination involving the structured exchange of information (e.g., "I join formal meetings or discussions to share information relevant to our group project"); (4) Internalisation emphasising learning by doing (e.g., "I find I understand concepts best when I can apply them to real situations"); and (5) Knowledge Environment reflecting the capacity to manage workplace demands (e.g., "I am confident in my ability to handle work-related pressure in a professional manner"). These dimensions together capture the extent to which students actively share, apply, and build upon knowledge in their academic environment (Takeuchi & Shibata, 2006).

Work readiness was measured through 14 items spanning four dimensions: (1) Core business skills (e.g., "I can adapt my approach when circumstances or expectations change"); (2) Communication skills (e.g., "I am able to write in a way that is clear, concise, accurate, and well-organised"); (3) Systems thinking skills (e.g., "I can approach problems from new or unconventional angles"); and (4) Teamwork and interpersonal skills (e.g., "I can build professional relationships and work well with a variety of people"). These dimensions reflect the core competencies that help bridge the gap between what students learn in university and what organisations require in new employees (Barbosa, Carrasco, & Abarca, 2022).

The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. This technique was used because the study aimed to examine the relationship among several latent variables, namely talent management, knowledge management, self-efficacy, and work readiness. The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was tested to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items through outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), cross-loading, Cronbach’s alpha, and composite reliability. Second, the structural model was examined to test the proposed relationships among variables using R-square values, path coefficients, T-statistics, and P-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure.

Results and Discussion

This study involved university students in the city of Banjarmasin. Data were collected online via Google Forms. Most participants were between the ages of 19 and 22, with gender percentage that mostly done by male respondents.

Table 1. Outer Loading Result

Variable	Category	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	182	52
	Female	168	48
Age	19 years old	214	61
	20 years old	112	32
	21 years old	18	5
	22 years old	7	2



Convergent validity was assessed using outer loading values, where any indicator with an outer loading above 0.7 is considered to meet the validity threshold. As shown in Table 2, all indicators in this study produced outer loading values exceeding 0.7. A total of 42 indicators passed this criterion and were therefore retained as valid measures suitable for use in subsequent stages of analysis.

Table 2. Outer Loading Result

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Result
Knowledge Management	KM1	0.791	Valid
	KM10	0.872	
	KM11	0.834	
	KM2	0.723	
	KM3	0.745	
	KM4	0.866	
	KM5	0.747	
	KM6	0.722	
	KM7	0.867	
	KM8	0.864	
Self-Efficacy	KM9	0.743	Valid
	SE1	0.881	
	SE2	0.781	
	SE3	0.739	
	SE4	0.727	
	SE5	0.716	
	SE6	0.729	
Talent Management	SE7	0.774	Valid
	TM1	0.872	
	TM10	0.765	
	TM2	0.728	
	TM3	0.701	
	TM4	0.755	
	TM5	0.736	
	TM6	0.746	
	TM7	0.762	
	TM8	0.862	
Work Readiness	TM9	0.715	Valid
	WR1	0.873	
	WR10	0.775	
	WR11	0.865	
	WR12	0.866	
	WR13	0.737	
	WR14	0.862	
	WR2	0.755	
	WR3	0.706	
	WR4	0.74	
	WR5	0.739	
	WR6	0.72	
	WR7	0.764	
	WR8	0.703	
	WR9	0.782	



To evaluate discriminant validity, this study employed a dual approach by analyzing both indicator cross-loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, applying a standard minimum threshold of 0.5. The cross-loading data presented in Table 3 demonstrates that all indicators exhibited higher loadings on their designated constructs than on alternative latent variables, thereby confirming discriminant validity. Following the complete PLS-SEM assessment via SmartPLS 4.0, 31 out of the initial 42 items satisfied these criteria and were preserved for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 3. Cross Loading Result

Indicator	KM	SE	TM	WR
KM1	0.816	0.613	0.684	0.677
KM2	0.729	0.596	0.634	0.558
KM3	0.764	0.54	0.658	0.618
KM5	0.777	0.686	0.685	0.755
KM6	0.728	0.662	0.614	0.498
KM9	0.761	0.617	0.57	0.559
SE1	0.657	0.88	0.649	0.596
SE2	0.662	0.781	0.623	0.605
SE3	0.518	0.738	0.532	0.442
SE4	0.612	0.727	0.63	0.549
SE5	0.65	0.716	0.628	0.575
SE6	0.573	0.73	0.578	0.551
SE7	0.651	0.775	0.639	0.544
TM1	0.718	0.674	0.881	0.653
TM10	0.663	0.596	0.769	0.56
TM2	0.61	0.674	0.728	0.574
TM3	0.535	0.524	0.702	0.529
TM4	0.674	0.652	0.763	0.553
TM5	0.628	0.633	0.738	0.609
TM6	0.605	0.617	0.747	0.556
TM7	0.683	0.584	0.762	0.591
TM9	0.609	0.493	0.715	0.6
WR10	0.682	0.602	0.601	0.791
WR13	0.541	0.506	0.555	0.749
WR14	0.722	0.662	0.668	0.871
WR3	0.495	0.495	0.525	0.721
WR4	0.506	0.483	0.514	0.762
WR5	0.546	0.499	0.535	0.757
WR6	0.701	0.575	0.629	0.722
WR8	0.612	0.518	0.619	0.700
WR9	0.682	0.603	0.598	0.795

Alongside the cross-loading approach, discriminant validity was further confirmed by inspecting the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct. A construct is considered to demonstrate adequate discriminant validity when its AVE value is greater than 0.5. The full AVE results for each variable in this study are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Result of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	(AVE)	Result
KM	0.640	Valid
SE	0.586	Valid



TM	0.587	Valid
WR	0.608	Valid

As shown in Table 4, the AVE value for the knowledge management variable (X1) was 0.640, comfortably exceeding the 0.5 benchmark. The self-efficacy variable (X2) returned an AVE of 0.586, likewise above the required threshold. Talent management (X3) produced an AVE of 0.587, again satisfying the minimum criterion. Finally, work readiness (Y) achieved an AVE of 0.608, also above 0.5. Taken together, these results confirm that all four constructs in this study demonstrate satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
KM	0.857	0.86	0.893
SE	0.881	0.884	0.908
TM	0.906	0.909	0.924
WR	0.911	0.915	0.927

Both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all four study variables ranged between 0.857 and 0.911, indicating a high level of internal consistency across all measurement instruments. As reflected in Table 5, every variable comfortably exceeded the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.7 for both reliability indicators, confirming the dependability of the scales used. With measurement model validity and reliability both confirmed, the analysis proceeded to evaluate the structural model. This stage focused on testing the proposed hypotheses and mapping the relationships between constructs, beginning with an examination of R-square values to assess the model's explanatory power, as shown in the table below:

Table 6. R-Square Value

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
KM	0.761	0.76
SE	0.643	0.642
WR	0.683	0.681

Table 6 shows that the R-square value of 0.761 indicates that 76.1% of the variance in knowledge management is explained by Self Efficacy and Talent Management, with Self-Efficacy, the value of 0.643 indicates that 64.3% of the variance is explain by Talent Management, and Work readiness 68.1% of the variance is explain by all knowledge management, self-efficacy, and also talent management. The remaining percentage for each variable is influenced by other variables outside this model.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Result

	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P values	
SE -> KM	0.381	8.297	0.000	Valid
TM -> KM	0.537	11.680	0.000	Valid
TM -> SE	0.802	33.135	0.000	Valid
TM -> WR	0.250	4.548	0.000	Valid
SE -> WR	0.115	2.299	0.011	Valid
KM -> WR	0.504	9.780	0.000	Valid



Table 7 presents the outcomes of the hypothesis testing process, which drew on path coefficients derived from the structural model evaluation. The analysis followed a bootstrapping procedure, and results were interpreted based on the original sample values, T-statistics, and P-values generated through this process.

In this study, knowledge management emerged as the strongest predictor of work readiness compared with self-efficacy. This result indicates that students' readiness to enter the workforce is more strongly shaped by how they acquire, share, and apply knowledge than by confidence alone. Self-efficacy remains important because it reflects students' belief in their own ability, but work readiness also requires practical learning habits, the ability to process information, and the capacity to use knowledge in real tasks. In the higher education institutions in Banjarmasin, this finding is relevant because students are expected not only to understand theories in the classroom but also to translate them into practical skills needed by employers. Knowledge management becomes a key factor because it connects academic learning with workplace demands through group discussion, project-based learning, internships, and experience-sharing activities. This explains why knowledge management has a stronger direct effect on work readiness than self-efficacy in this study.

The findings align with existing studies from (Borg, Scott-Young, & Borg, 2023) that show Work Readiness in early career have major influenced by self-efficacy the person have. The present study found a statistically significant but comparatively modest positive effect of self-efficacy on work readiness. This finding partially resolves the contradiction noted by Violinda et al. (2023), who reported a non-significant effect. The current result suggests that self-efficacy does exert a positive influence on work readiness. It means students' belief in their own ability to perform a specific task is a critical construct for understanding their work motivation and performance, as we can see it as their readiness for a professional working environment.

TM also has a significant effect on work readiness, like (Ramaditya, Effendi, & Fitriani, 2023) say Talent management (TM) exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on students' work readiness, indicating that enhanced talent management practices directly correspond to higher levels of career preparedness. Consequently, when educational institutions successfully implement structured talent management systems, their graduates are notably better equipped to transition into the professional world.

(Raut S. K., Alon, Rana, & Saks, 2023) stated that knowledge management will help produce culturally competent graduates ready for global collaborations. Align with this study findings, that found knowledge management effect on work readiness. It show that the realization about how they manage the learning process and the result of it will be impactful on how ready they are after graduate.

Talent management (TM) has been recognized as a significant antecedent of knowledge management (KM) in organizational settings. (Bagorogoza, 2022) demonstrated that talent management practices including attraction, deployment, development, and retention positively predict knowledge management behaviour in organisational settings, a finding replicated in the current academic context. This study also finds that improvements in TM practices directly contribute to improvements in KM, particularly in how student acquire, share, and respond to knowledge. In essence, this study concluded that effective TM is a prerequisite for effective KM, implying that student cannot meaningfully harness the benefits of knowledge management unless they first attract and retain talented and knowledgeable students.



(Nelson, Agatha, & Setyawan, 2025) argued that each dimension of talent management can contribute to building self-efficacy among individuals in an organization. Succession planning in particular offers a clear vision of future career growth, which encourages individuals to work with greater confidence and take on higher responsibilities (Nelson et al., 2025). In the university student context, talent management practices such as structured academic development programs, mentoring by faculty, and clear pathways to career readiness are expected to produce similar effects on students' self-efficacy.

(Safdar, Batool, & Mahmood, 2021) analyzed in thier studies and provided a proof that there is a positive relationship between Self Efficacy and Knowledge Management factor. This mean student who has better performance and confidence in their abilities tend to sharing more useful and accurate knowledge with their friends or peers.

Overall, this study confirms The strongest predictor of work readiness was knowledge management ($\beta = 0.504$), followed by talent management ($\beta = 0.250$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.115$), suggesting that student need to master their learning and study style for them to become more prepared for the work after graduate. Furthermore, this study confirms that student career readiness is not solely determined by self-efficacy; rather, it is deeply intertwined with talent and knowledge management factors. Consequently, these findings suggest that a multidimensional framework is essential to properly equip students for the complexities of the modern workforce.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of talent management, knowledge management, and self-efficacy on the work readiness of undergraduate students at Lambung Mangkurat University, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The findings show that all proposed relationships were supported, indicating that students' work readiness is shaped by the interaction of institutional support, knowledge-related learning behaviour, and students' confidence in their own abilities.

Knowledge management emerged as the most important factor in explaining students' work readiness, followed by talent management and self-efficacy. This finding suggests that students are better prepared for employment when they are able to acquire, share, organize, and apply knowledge in academic and practical learning contexts. Talent management also plays an important role because structured academic support, mentoring, competency development, and career-oriented learning can strengthen both students' confidence and their knowledge management behaviour.

Overall, these findings confirm that students' work readiness is not determined by a single factor, but by the combination of talent-development practices, knowledge management behaviour, and self-belief. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on how talent management, knowledge management, and self-efficacy are connected in explaining student work readiness in the context of higher education in Indonesia. Practically, the findings suggest that universities should strengthen knowledge-sharing activities, project-based learning, internships, mentoring, and career development programmes to better prepare students for the workplace.

Recommendation

This study examined the influence of talent management, knowledge management, and self-efficacy on the work readiness of undergraduate students at Lambung Mangkurat University, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. The findings show that all proposed



relationships were supported, indicating that students' work readiness is shaped by the interaction of institutional support, knowledge-related learning behaviour, and students' confidence in their own abilities.

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