Engagement in student organizations and graduates' readiness to enter the job market

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Abstract

Studies highlight particular concern about the work readiness of university graduates, which potentially leads to many undesirable outcomes, such as rising unemployment rates and low productivity levels in the workplace. This study aims to explore the differences between student organization and work experiences and further analyze student organization's contribution to graduate's work readiness. This research uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods, and the data is analyzed with thematic data analysis. Data were collected through interviews involving 15 recent graduates actively involved in student organizations and just starting their careers. The study also interviewed two more senior workers to serve as source triangulation, strengthening the validity of the collected data. The study found four key differences between student organizations and the world of work. These differences include primary orientation, feedback and reward system, hierarchical structure, and interaction experiences. The findings also indicate that student organization experiences enhance individual skill development, which later proves helpful in work life. In particular, student organizational experience significantly advances these skills: leadership, time management, self-confidence, problem-solving, integrity, critical thinking, communication, negotiation, teamwork, responsibility, and commitment. Additionally, the record of student organizational participation listed on curriculum vitae can be a valuable asset for recent graduates, enhancing their employment prospects.

Introduction

The lack of work readiness among university graduates has become a significant issue in various countries (Winterton & Turner, 2019), including Indonesia (Verma et al., 2018). This deficiency can lead to detrimental effects such as high unemployment rates (Orr et al., 2023) and low productivity levels in the industry (Siddique et al., 2022). The increasing complexity and competitiveness of the modern job market necessitate that university students are adequately prepared for the workforce (Stephen & Fru, 2023). Studies (de Villiers Scheepers et al., 2018; García-Aracil et al., 2021) have shown that preparing students for the workforce is a shared responsibility between universities and students. For students, participation in student organizations is one of the key mediums through which they can acquire the necessary skills and experience (Kramer et al., 2021).

Research indicates that involvement in student organizations helps develop valuable soft skills and workplace-related abilities (Linando et al., 2018). These organizations provide platforms for nurturing interests, talents, and skills relevant to the workforce (Eklund-Leen & Young, 1997). The primary goals of student organizations include developing students' interests and talents, providing practical experiences and knowledge (Ridder et al., 2014), and consequently forming quality human resources that are competitive in the job market.

However, the literature has a division regarding the appropriate focus for investigating workforce preparedness. Some studies (Bosch et al., 2017; Routh et al., 2022) concentrate on active students, while others (Gray et al., 2012; Wells et al., 2021) focus on already-graduated students. Some scholars (Xiao et al., 2018) also argue that workforce preparedness should be considered well before the university phase, starting from high school. These variations highlight the need to explore workforce readiness across different phases further.

The present study contributes to the literature on recent graduates by examining those who have just started working. This focus stands on the rationale that recent graduates understand the current workforce circumstances while still having a fresh memory of their involvement in student organizations. This selection aligns with Luthans and Youssef-Morgan's (2017) assertion, highlighting the importance of recent graduates' perspectives and experiences in academic and organizational settings for understanding the transition from university to the workplace.

Moreover, this study explores an issue rarely discussed in the literature: the differences between student organizations and the workforce by conducting in-depth interviews with respondents from diverse workplaces, fields, and professions. By exploring those differences, the study aims to illustrate further how active participation in student organizations helps students become work-ready in the future.

Literature Review

Student Organizations

Student organizations serve as a platform provided by universities to develop a wide array of skills and competencies among students, significantly enhancing their overall educational experience (Wati, 2023). Previous research has shown that involvement in extracurricular activities such as student organizations positively impacts academic goals, enhances self-confidence, and improves interpersonal and leadership skills (Montelongo, 2022). Participating in student organizations offers numerous benefits aligned with their objectives, including expanding networks (Sungurova et al., 2017), understanding others, broadening perspectives, pre-professional training (Ningrum & Azalia, 2018), time management skills, and enhancing communication skills (Choirunisa & Madjid, 2023).

Generally, universities offer various student organizations that students can choose based on their interests, talents, or goals (Borges et al., 2017). Organizations have an important role, functioning as a platform where students can develop their own soft skills, which will be very useful for the future, both in the workplace and in addressing problems in society (Borges et al., 2017). Through active participation in student organizations, students are facing new experiences which will increase some skill and interest including soft skills (Triwibowo et al., 2023). This process can enhance a sense of responsibility, discipline, and hard work to fulfill the student organizations goals also project work programs. In student organizations, decision-making is also done by deliberating because it can foster a sense of patience, tolerance and sincerity in are willing to accept the final result as explained on behalf of all decisions.

Work Experience

Quiñones et al. (1995) define work experience as events that an individual experiences which are proximal to job performance. The point of this definition is that work experience involves everything and all events or activities a person may have while doing certain duties, tasks or task. This may include anything from overcoming obstacles, finding solutions to a problem working with workmates or taking valuable lessons away from normal day-to-day experiences. In this sense, prior research suggests that the advantages of working during university in negotiating graduates' transitions to work are also complemented by increased job market knowledge and self-efficacy as well as clearer ideas of what they want from their future careers (Monteiro et al., 2020). Work experience is identified by students in the research of Forsyth and Cowap (2017) as a factor that can enhance future employability, offer real-world insights into career paths or opportunities to gain and practice skills and relationships with others. Work experience made the development of

essential employment skills, such as teamwork, communication, interpersonal skills for students so that they can come work-ready (Beyer et al., 2016).

Work Readiness

Work readiness refers to an individual's ability to complete specific tasks according to their capabilities and willingness (Imron & Abdullah, 2023). The concept implies that a newly graduated individual is prepared and has opportunities to secure employment (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). Work readiness often encompasses emotional management, social relationships, and essential life skills. This includes self-awareness, self-management skills such as personal responsibility, social awareness, responsibility towards others, and the ability to communicate and interact effectively with others (Boat et al., 2021).

The characteristics of a person who can be said to have job readiness include knowing and understanding what they will do in their job according to the position they hold and the targets that have been set (Gates et al., 2018). A person's job readiness can also be seen from how they adjust to their surroundings, allowing them to work collaboratively (Rotz & Dueñas, 2016). Additionally, they must be able to solve problems, have a positive attitude and accept risks as a consequence of their job and environment, understand and be able to overcome problems arising from their work (Karlins & Rf, 2018).

Research conducted previously highlight that there are two main determinants to student work readiness. The first concerning has three items: self-maturity, mental and emotional state of mind, and personal development initiatives. The second is comprised of two parts: experience, and intelligence. The first factor is, in simple words, personal growth and emotional stability of a student (his/her level of maturity, mental/emotional condition and hunger for the self-improvement). Second, it refers more to their intellectual background and capabilities which include which involves work experience or other experience and level of intelligence possessed (Sultoni et al., 2023).

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understand the meanings behind individual experiences, particularly regarding how university graduates interpret and position the influence of their organizational experiences on work readiness. The methodology started with exploring the phenomenon of interest: the effects of students' participation in an organization on their work readiness. Next, a review of the existing studies was completed to present the context and define the gaps in the knowledge needed to be addressed by this study. Following this lead, participants with relevant experience regarding the phenomenon were identified and contacted to participate in the study. To obtain the detailed information on the identified issue, interviews were completed using open-ended questions to provide the participants with the opportunity to expand on their experience.

The data collection is semi-structured in nature. The questions prepared by the authors were only used to guide the discussion. Whenever the respondents mentioned interesting points, the authors then elaborate on those points through asking impromptu questions. In addition, analysis was done by identifying the most and least important statements, creating codes, and grouping them together in the several clusters based on their similarity and semantical purpose. In the end, the presented findings were outlined in a clear manner identifying the emergent themes and discussing how they contribute to the understanding the research objectives. Figure 1 portrays the procedure of the phenomenological study done by the authors.

With regards to the interview questions, Table 1 compiles the set of guiding questions used by the authors in collecting the data. The first set of questions is an introduction to ask for basic current job background information, including their job organization as university affiliation and year they graduated. The remainder of the questions relate to participation in student organizations, including how long a participant may have been involved with such an organization and what role(s) they held. The interviews go deeper into how these experiences shaped their ability and

knowledge development, but here in this post it is comparing what an organization experience provides versus a work one. Participants reflect on how participating in their organization has prepared them for the workforce and will recognize potent projects or activities/gauge what exact organizational experiences have been productive. Finally, ask how these experiences prepared the candidate to face challenges in their job search, illustrating both teamwork/client facing experience as well practical benefits of student organizational involvement.
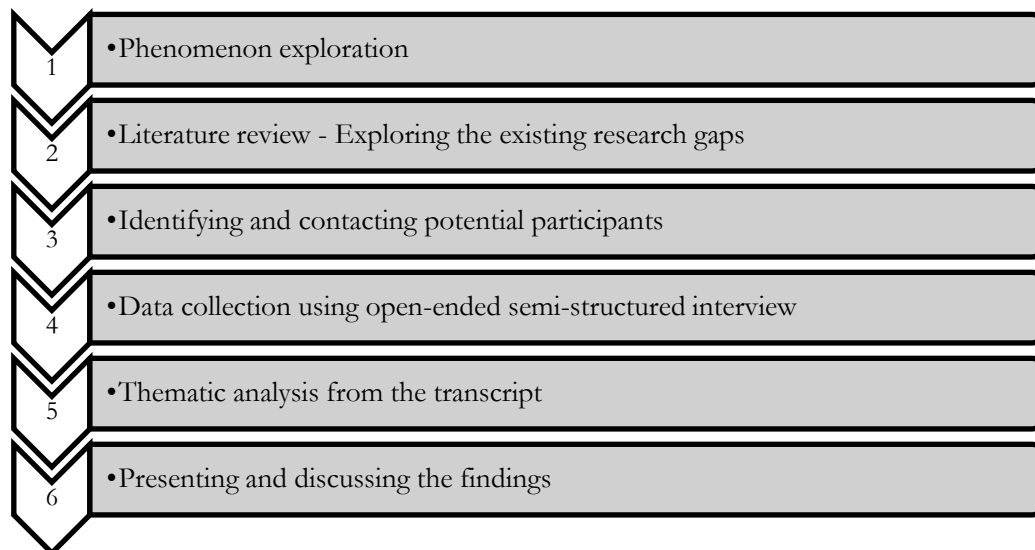
Figure 1. Phenomenological Study Procedure

Table 1. Data Collection Questions

Phase	Guiding Questions
Introduction	1. Name, age, current job, length of work
	2. Collage of origin, major, year of graduation
Organizational involvement	3. Organizational experience during college
	4. Types of student organizations that participated in
	5. Length of participation in the organization
Roles and responsibility	6. Role of responsibility in the organization
	7. Specific experience in the organization
Skills development	8. Contribution of organizational experience to skills and knowledge
	9. Comparison of organizational experience with work experience
Contribution to work readiness	10. Contribution of organizational experience to job readiness
	11. Most valuable organizational project or activity
	12. Organizational experience useful for current job readiness
Job search challenges	13. Organizational experience in helping to overcome the challenges of finding a first job

The respondents must previously have participated in a student organization during their study period and should have a minimum of 2 months of work experience. The number of respondents for this study is 15, with an additional two as triangulation respondents. The determination of the number 15 was based on the observation that no new information emerged after interviewing the 13th respondent. Nevertheless, to ensure that all information has been gathered, the authors decided to add two more respondents. After those two additions, no additional information was found, so the authors decided to stop collecting the data.

Such an approach aligns with qualitative scholars' suggestion that data collection can be concluded when saturation is already reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The authors added two respondents as triangulation sources to ensure the findings' validity and reliability. These sources were also determined to have student organization experiences and have already worked for at least five years, so they can further confirm whether the information mentioned by the respondents was

valid and reliable. Such a triangulation technique also aligns with qualitative scholars' suggestions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Table 2. Respondents Information

No	Initial	Study Major	Student Organizations	Current Profession	Interview Duration (Minutes)
1.	AF	Engineering	BEM*	School Headmaster	21
2.	HAS	Mechanical Engineering	BEM	Data Analyst Laboratory Assistant	56
3.	AFBI	Sharia Banking	BEM	Financial Administration and Social Media Admin	18
4.	TRR	Japanese Language Education	UKM*, BEM, HMJ*	Extra-Curricular Teacher	22
5.	EE	Optical Refraction	BEM	Optician Reflexology	16
6.	S	Hospitality	BEM	Barista	10
7.	CWD	Islamic Law	MARCOM*	Public Relations	17
8.	YAS	Management	HMI* & KMNU*	Sales Admin	37
9.	MAH	Sociology	UKM	Graphic Designer	15
10.	IKD	Statistics	HMJ & UKM	Finance And Marketing Department	39
11.	RA	Statistics	HMJ & UKM	Data Entry Officer	20
12.	UN	Islamic Broadcasting Communications	HMJ	Human Resource Staff	28
13.	R	Sociology	UKM	Teacher	11
14.	AH	Japanese Language Education	IMM*	Teacher	13
15.	H	Primary Teacher Education	UKM	Teacher	32
Source Triangulation					
1.	M	Mathematics Education	HMJ & BEM	Teacher (10 years)	14
2.	J	Industrial Engineering	BEM	Section Head (6 years)	21

*BEM: Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa (Student Executive Board)
*HMJ: Himpunan Mahasiswa Jurusan (Department Student Association)
*UKM: Unit Kegiatan Kemahasiswaan (Student Activity Unit)
*IMM: Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Student Association)
*KMNU: Keluarga Mahasiswa Nahdatul Ulama (Nahdatul Ulama Student Family)
*HMI: Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic Student Association)
*MARCOM: Marketing & Communication

The researchers then used thematic analysis as their main data analysis approach. It consists of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study would benefit from a thematic analysis as it provides an in-depth exploration of college students experience and preparedness for work through the variety themes that will be evident upon examining its narratives. This strategy provides the researchers with a way to hear student organizational experiences in their complexity and implications for professional preparedness.

After conducting thematic analysis of data from research sources, researchers did not find any new theories that emerged. However, this research is in line with the theory proposed by Alexander W. Astin, namely the student involvement theory in 1984. Student involvement theory explains simply why student involvement in educational programs is so important. The three main components of this theory are input factors (demographics, background, and previous experience), environmental factors, and outcomes, namely knowledge and attitudes. These three components contribute to the success of student engagement (Astin, 1999).

Previous research explains that student involvement in student organizations has a positive impact on educational outcomes (Eklund-Leen & Young, 1997). This is also corroborated by other research which states that interaction and participation in extracurricular activities, such as student organizations, have a positive impact on academic goals, greater self-confidence, and improved interpersonal and leadership skills (Montelongo, 2022). This means that participation in student organization activities can help improve students' academic achievement as well as non-academic skills in educational institutions. Thus, student organizations are an important part of the educational programs provided by campuses, due to their contribution in enriching the learning process and student development.

Results and Discussion

Comparing Student Organization and Work Experiences

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, student organization and work have both similarities and differences. In an interview with respondent AFA, AFA stated:

> *"...So, if you say, yes, it's different. But the main difference that can distinguish them is the money-oriented aspect and the age or maturity level..."*

From this statement, it can be concluded that the prominent difference between student organization and work is the *primary orientation*. In the workplace, individuals work for the salary, which is not valid in student organizations. Additionally, the subsequent difference lies in the *hierarchical structure*. The workplace involves individuals from various ages and generations. It is different with student organizations, where the leaders and subordinates are generally peers of similar ages.

This is also corroborated by a statement from informant CWD. CWD stated:

> *"...Besides that, the supervisor is really like a boss. In our organization, the superiors might be our own friends, if not seniors of only one year. Whereas at work it can be 10 years above us, 20 years above us..."*

From this explanation, CWD revealed that the difference between the two lies in the hierarchical structure, namely that the boss in the work environment really carries out the role of a boss and has a lot of experience.

Respondent YAS, in an interview, mentioned another factor distinguishing student organization and the world of work:

> *"...What distinguishes them is the performance appraisal. In the workplace, our performance affects our remuneration or salary. In an organization, it's more about soft skill development and the sincerity of the heart..."*

According to YAS, the distinguishing factor is the *performance appraisal*. In the workplace, one's performance affects one's salary and career advancement, whereas, in student organizations, one's performance will further influence their soft skill development.

IKD added that the differences are in *orientation, hierarchical structure, and interaction experiences*. In student organizations, typically, members interact and work with those in similar backgrounds, while in the workplace, the background is more diverse:

> *"...The difference might be that in organizations; our relations are mostly among fellow students. But now, in the workplace, we meet important people, officials, and people whose fields are no longer in doubt..."*

Regarding similarities between the two, respondent AFB stated that both student organization and work experiences provide added *value in self-development*:

> *"…both provide added value in self-development…"*

Respondent EE added that both teach *professionalism and responsibility*:

> *"...There is a slight difference, but there are also similarities. In both organizations and work, we can differentiate between individual and group work. So, when tasks are given, personal issues should not interfere; professionalism must be maintained in both..."*

In an interview with respondent S, she stated:

> *"...Work and organizational experiences are almost the same. Why do I say that? Because in both organizations and work, we encounter teamwork. Whether with a team or members for the continuity and smooth running of the organization or job..."*

According to S, both student organization and work experiences involve the *value of cooperation*. From the participants' explanations, the following table summarizes the comparison of student organization and work experiences.
This is also corroborated by a statement from informant CWD. CWD stated:

> *"...The thing is there is a difference, there is cooperation. I mean, if it's the same in the organization, we need teamwork. There are superiors, there are subordinates, how do we respond like that? But in an organization, it's not about us looking for finances. We're in the organization, it means we're serving the organization. So not all of them will get feedback, money, or so on, right?..."*

From this explanation, CWD revealed that the difference between the two lies in their orientation, while the similarity lies in the value of cooperation. Both in organizations and in the world of work, cooperation is equally needed.

The findings identify several differences and similarities between work and student organizational experiences. The first difference is orientation; the work world is money-oriented, while organizational experience focuses on developing soft skills. Students are motivated to join organizations to train and develop their soft skills, such as commitment, integrity, and leadership, valued by employers (Kelling & Hoover, 2005).

The second difference lies in feedback and rewards. In the world of work, individual performance is appraised through performance appraisals impacting reward and punishment (Linando, 2021). Most companies use formal performance appraisal systems for decisions related to salary, development, and career transitions (Murphy, 2020). In contrast, student organizations focus on knowledge and personal growth (Hidayah et al., 2022), rather than financial or political gain.

The third difference is in hierarchical structure. In student organizations, superiors may be peers, classmates, seniors, or students from different majors (Haines, 2019). On the other hand, in the world of work, superiors are generally older, more experienced, and influential in terms of career (Li et al., 2023). The last difference is in interaction experience. Work interactions are more diverse, involving various age groups and stakeholders (Chygryn et al., 2020), whereas in student organizations, interactions are more frequent among peers or groups with similar backgrounds.

Four similarities were also identified based on the findings. The first similarity is in self-development. Both student organizations and workplaces provide opportunities for self-development and learning new skills. This remark indicates that those students involved in student organizations have a growth mindset (Zarrinabadi et al., 2022). The second similarity is the value of teamwork. Both student organizations and workplaces recognize the importance of collaboration in achieving common goals. In student organizations, students must collaborate to achieve organizational objectives and strengthen member unity (Rotz & Dueñas, 2016). Similarly, successful companies emphasize teamwork to advance their progress (Johnson, 2021).

The third and fourth similarities lie in responsibility and professionalism. Individuals should be responsible for their tasks and roles in student organizations and workplaces. Students may consider joining student organizations to develop themselves before entering the professional world (industry) (Linando et al., 2018). Student organizations are ideal platforms for building professional attitudes (Mitra, 2022).

Table 3. Student Organization and Work Experience Comparison

Differences	Similarities
Primary orientation	Self-development
Feedback and reward system	Value of cooperation
Hierarchical structure	Responsibility
Interaction experience	Professionalism

Student Organization Contribution toward Work Readiness

Based on the interviews conducted, student organizations provide diverse student experiences. These diverse experiences offer many benefits to respondents seeking to develop skills that cannot be acquired solely through classroom attendance. As stated by respondent AF:

> "...After I worked, I found that 70% of soft skills must be honed. And 70% of the soft skills are honed not in the classroom. It's not like we go to class in the afternoon and come back in the evening, but not in lectures. But we gain it in organizations, where we acquire many soft skills. For example, the most significant soft skill I gained was leadership. In leadership, there are many derivative soft skills we need to have, such as communication, social interaction, confidence, public relations, public speaking, negotiation, and so on. We acquire these when we develop leadership soft skills…"

From AF's statement, it indicates that in organizations, soft skills are honed. They cannot be obtained solely through classroom attendance but through active participation in student organizations. The soft skills gained include *leadership* and its derivatives, such as *communication, public speaking, public relations, confidence, and negotiation.*

This is also corroborated by a statement from interviewee AFB. AFB stated:

> "…Yes, it is very influential, the organizational experience has made a big contribution. For me when facing work readiness, for example, managing time and then working in a team to handle tasks with responsibility. That's it mbak…"

CWD said that student organization experience has a big contribution to work readiness. By joining student organizations, CWD can manage time well and can handle tasks with responsibility and teach how to work well in teams.

In another interview, RA mentioned that student organizations teach skills such as *communication, time management, and confidence.* RA said:

> "Yes, skills like speaking, better time management, becoming more sociable, and developing small skills such as writing and designing. In essence, skills that were not present before can emerge…"

These soft skill developments were also felt by several interviewees who participated in student organizations. In an interview with YAS, the interviewee also revealed that in the student organization that she participated in, she was able to develop her skills in *public speaking, negotiation, conflict resolution and decision-making.* These skills have contributed to the interviewee's work readiness.

> "...What is very useful is decision making, public speaking and negotiation. That's the experience I got a lot when I was in the organization and used it. Leadership has not been used in the workplace because my position is still subordinate. So I don't have people yet..."

This was also confirmed by several interviewees such as the interview conducted with interviewee TRR. The interviewee argued that:

> "...This, the first thing that is clear is definitely public speaking like that. Because maybe at first I was still afraid to speak in front of many people like that. Because in the organization, you will automatically meet a lot of people. So there you get the public speaking, then time management. Because automatically we don't

just manage college time, but we also have outside activities like that. And administration, so it's more organized like that. That's what I think..."

The experience gained in student organizations has contributed to improving the *public speaking and self-confidence* of the interviewees until the interviewees enter the work environment as said by interviewee IKD.

"…Yes, more public speaking and again I said confidence there is extraordinary if we are in the public relations department and the administration department. Because the impact can still be felt until now..."

Additionally, organizational experience can be a plus point for job applicants where the Human Resources (HR) department typically considers the organizational experience listed on a *curriculum vitae* (CV). As a respondent, UN, stated:

"...I always include some organizations and activities I participated in. And I think it significantly impacts the interview with HR. Because during the interview, they often ask about organizational experience, especially for an operator role where prior work experience may not be extensive, even if it was an internship. But HR assesses this experience. As someone in HR, I understand that they assess how well you manage what is in front of you. When we participate in organizations, we are used to managing tasks, including managing programs and teams. So, it is very impactful compared to someone who does not include organizational experience on their CV…"

It indicates that organizational experience is a positive indicator for passing interviews and is a plus for job applicants. In student organizations, *soft skills* are honed not only through interactions among members but also through skill development training, as expressed by MAH:

"...There, I also received training such as writing. Why can I work in a field unrelated to my major? Because I learned from soft skills and developed them. Thus, I can work even if it is not aligned with my major. But I improvise to develop. And the student organization also trains us for such things..."

The verbatim expression above explains that organizations equip their members with skills that help run the organization and prepare them for work readiness in the future. In an interview with AF, AF expressed that the most used skills in the current work environment are *leadership and time management*. AF said:

"...What is very useful is more like punctuality and time management, which means the soft skills of editing are now social media admins. It is richer in time speed and jobdesk2 that must be formed in one day. Planning for planning any projects and skills such as team leadership. In my work, I also lead a group..."

The contribution of organizational experience to work readiness includes fostering *professional characteristics such as integrity, responsibility, and commitment*. These traits are essential soft skills for individuals, as expressed by another respondent, HAS:

"As students, before entering the workforce, make the most of the opportunities. Sometimes, I miss being a student, especially in making programs, drafting budgets, and executing plans. These experiences train us in teamwork, leadership, professional conduct, integrity, and separating emotions from work, which are critical when entering the workforce."

According to HAS, *professional attitudes* and *teamwork skills* are developed through organizational involvement. Without a sense of responsibility, commitment, integrity, and adaptability within an organization, it will be challenging to implement these traits in the workplace. Organizational experience includes collaborating in drafting budgets, designing programs, and executing them, which are valuable in professional settings.

This is also corroborated by a statement from informant S. S stated:

"...Organizational experience that is useful when I work, what I feel and experience, namely the ability to work together as a team and be disciplined in carrying out regulations, being on time and others..."

S said that student organization experience has a major contribution to work readiness. By joining student organizations, S can implement how to work together in a team well and can manage time, and be disciplined towards existing regulations.

The other three skills honed through student organizations are *problem-solving, critical thinking, and commitment*. UN, HAS, and RA, respectively, mentioned how student organizations helped the students to acquire those skills:

> *"There is a lot of experience, especially in how we solve problems…"*
> *"We are taught to think critically, to use our critical thinking skills in life, to be creative, and to understand that we don't always have to say yes."*
> *"In an organization, it's more about our commitment, because we have committed to join the organization or participate in the committee."*

The in-depth analysis identified that student organizations are crucial in developing communication skills, teamwork, negotiation, leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, time management, and other skills beneficial for work readiness. Previous research indicates that possessing numerous skills appeals to employers (Baird & Parayitam, 2019).

Communication skills involve effectively sharing thoughts, feelings, information, news, and perspectives. These skills are essential for building relationships without barriers or discrimination based on religion, race, or gender and for explaining ideas clearly (Sabbah et al., 2020). Teamwork skills encompass behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to a team achieving specific goals. Employers value employees with teamwork skills (Creo et al., 2020). Negotiation skills involve effectively making offers to achieve desired outcomes. Globalization, workforce diversity, and competitive job markets require workers to have negotiation skills (Chapman et al., 2017).

Problem-solving skills entail defining and identifying problems, seeking alternative solutions, and implementing the best solutions in new situations (Araiza-Alba et al., 2021). These skills help individuals handle various work-related problems (Ayres & Malouff, 2007). Critical thinking is a higher-order thinking skill (HOTS) that involves understanding and relating relevant meanings, not just rote memorization (Halpern & Dunn, 2021). Critical thinking fosters independence, creative ideas, and empathy in the workplace and minimizes misperceptions (Eggers et al., 2017).

Time management skills involve setting achievable goals, prioritizing tasks, monitoring progress, and staying organized (Grissom et al., 2015). Effective time management minimizes excessive stress and enhances performance (Obilor, 2019). At the same time, leadership skills involve influencing and directing a group to achieve goals (Yaffe & Kark, 2011). Influential leaders are innovative, risk-takers, opportunity explorers, and good communicators (Kwan & Shen, 2015).

Participants in this study agreed that soft skills implemented in the workplace were acquired, trained, and sharpened from student organizational experiences in college. After graduation, those skills are beneficial and help them succeed in the workplace. Such an illustration of skills acquisition aligns with the role of higher education institutions to ensure graduates possess the necessary skills for workplace success (Tsirkas et al., 2020).

Organizational activities in higher education significantly contribute to work readiness. Students participating in organizations gain valuable experiences that support academic studies and provide essential job-seeking skills (Hidayah et al., 2022). Organizational activities effectively develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed in the workforce. Previous research also indicates that organizational experience hones skills, and students with such experience are more job-ready than those without (Spanjaard et al., 2018).

In addition to data from informants, previous research indicates that student organizations are ideal places for fostering professionalism (Linando et al., 2018). This note suggests that student organizations are platforms for instilling hard work, discipline, and responsibility. Furthermore, the deliberation and consensus used within these organizations to make decisions ultimately help members become more patient, tolerant, and sincere in fulfilling their responsibilities according to the collectively made decisions (Dunkel et al., 2014). Table 4 summarizes the soft skills earned through student organizations and the rationale for how those skills contribute to work readiness.

Table 4. Student Organizations Contribution to Work Readiness

Soft Skills	Potential Contribution to Work Readiness
Leadership	Ability to lead projects and teams in a work environment.
Time Management	Efficiency and priority setting in the work environment.
Self-Confidence	Confidence in interactions with coworkers and superiors.
Problem-Solving	Ability to solve problems effectively.
Integrity	Have integrity in the work environment.
Critical Thinking	Ability to think critically when facing work challenges.
Communication and Public Speaking	Effective public speaking and communication skills.
Negotiation	Develop negotiation skills to reach agreements in the work environment.
Teamwork	Ability to work in teams, collaborate, and complete group tasks.
Responsibility	Have a sense of responsibility for the tasks undertaken.
Commitment	Commit to strive to achieve company goals continuously.

Implication and Conclusion

According to the research objectives of exploring how experience in student organizations enhances workplace readiness for students in a working environment, it can concluded that student experiences are crucial for developing individual skills. Additionally, student organizational experience on a CV can be a positive indicator for applicants, making them more attractive to employers. Student organizational experience significantly contributes to a graduate's work readiness, particularly in developing communication skills, teamwork, negotiation, leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, and time management. The development of these soft skills is essential for students to succeed in the professional world. Organizational experience also cultivates professional character traits such as integrity, responsibility, and commitment. Directing students to participate actively in student organizations during their study period may contribute to reducing the potential problems caused by lack of work readiness, such as but not limited to unemployment and low productivity levels in the workplace. In addition, work experience and organizational experience are two important aspects that complement each other in the development of individual skills. Although there are differences between the two, they are both valuable assets for an individual to succeed in the work environment.

The findings from this research hold meaningful implications for educational institutions, future employers, and students. For educational institutions, the proof recommends that nurturing student involvement in organizational activities can considerably enhance graduates' employability. By incorporating organizational experiences into academic programs and furnishing robust support for student-driven initiatives, institutions can better outfit students for the demands of the professional landscape. Prospective employers may view organizational experience on a curriculum vitae as a trusted sign of a candidate's potential for workplace achievement, therefore emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing such experiences in recruitment processes. For students, proactive participation in student organizations emerges as a strategic route for developing essential soft skills and professional qualities that are progressively pursued after in the job market.

A notable limitation of this study is the restricted diversity of occupational backgrounds among the interviewed individuals, which may also have impacted the comprehensiveness of the conclusions. Even though the outcomes offer valid insights, embracing a broader range of occupational backgrounds could enhance the identification of factors influencing work preparedness throughout diverse industries. Widening the diversity of participants would contribute to a more holistic comprehension of the dynamics at play in different professional contexts.

Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to seek interviewees with diverse work histories to enhance the comprehensiveness in their findings and incorporate a broader range of perspectives. This tactic may facilitate the identification of factors influencing job readiness throughout various sectors. By doing so, next research can provide a more nuanced and expansive

understanding of the interplay between organizational experience and work readiness, thereby enriching the discourse on professional preparedness.

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