

The Influence of Social Support and Employment Skills on Work Readiness Among Persons with Disabilities in Gresik Regency

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Abstrack

This study aims to analyze the influence of social support and employment skills on work readiness among persons with disabilities in Gresik Regency. The research employs a quantitative approach with a causal design to examine the relationships between variables. Data were collected by distributing Likert-scale questionnaires to 66 respondents with disabilities, aged 17–25 years (within the productive age range), who had completed vocational training programs. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. The variables examined include social support, employment skills, and work readiness. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software, including tests for validity, reliability, coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and hypothesis testing through path coefficients. The findings indicate that social support does not have a significant impact on work readiness for individuals with disabilities, while employment skills exert a positive and significant influence on work readiness.

Kata Kunci: *Social Support; Employment Skills; Work Readiness; Persons with Disabilities*

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Intoduction

Work Readiness is an important topic in human resource development, especially in this era of rapid change that demands flexibility, skill mastery, and greater mental preparedness. Individual success in the future is largely determined by their ability to adapt, collaborate, and communicate effectively in a dynamic environment (Cahyadi & Respati, 2025). From an industry perspective, there is a need for a workforce that is not only rich in technical knowledge but also proficient in non-technical skills, such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. This poses a challenge when graduates from various educational institutions, including Special Schools (SLB), are not fully prepared for work due to a mismatch between the competencies acquired during their education and the actual needs of the world of work. This issue reflects theoretical and practical challenges related to factors that influence work readiness, especially among groups with specific characteristics, such as individuals with disabilities.

This problem becomes very real and relevant when linked to the situation in Gresik Regency. As a rapidly developing industrial area, Gresik offers many job opportunities. These concrete actions reflect the support of the government, which should be appreciated as progress. Although the government has made efforts to increase inclusiveness in the labor sector, there is still a gap between the opportunities available and the level of preparation of people with disabilities to enter the world of work. According to Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, government

agencies (Regional Apparatus Organizations/OPD) are required to employ at least 2 percent of individuals with disabilities from the total number of employees, while private companies must accommodate a minimum of 1 percent. They are entitled to equal opportunities in employment, including recruitment, training, placement, and career development without discrimination. However, the competitive job market requires a skilled and ready workforce, which creates barriers for individuals with disabilities who often have lower Labor Force Participation Rates (LFPR) compared to those without disabilities (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2023). This situation highlights the inequality between individuals' potential and their readiness to enter the workforce.

Table 1. Data on Persons with Disabilities in Gresik Regency

No	Description	Number
1.	Number of Persons with Disabilities in Gresik Regency	410 Persons
2.	Types of Disabilities :	
	1. Deaf	6
	2. Physically Disabled	182
	3. Speech Impaired	3
3.	Age (17-25 years old)	7%

Source: Gresik Regency Social Services Agency, 2022

Based on information obtained from the Social Services in 2022, the number of individuals with disabilities in Gresik Regency was recorded at 410 people. This figure indicates that people with disabilities constitute a fairly large group in society and require special attention from both the government and the surrounding community. In terms of the type of disability, the majority are physically disabled (tunadaksa), totaling 182 individuals, who have limitations in bodily functions or movement. In addition, there are 6 people with hearing impairments (tunarungu) and 3 people with speech impairments (tunawicara), indicating difficulty in speaking. These numbers suggest that physical disabilities are more predominant than other types of disabilities in Gresik Regency.

From an age perspective, people with disabilities aged 17 to 25 account for 7% of the total. This age range is a productive period, meaning they have the potential to engage in activities, work, or participate in skills training if supported with proper facilities, guidance, and policies. Overall, this data provides insight that people with disabilities in Gresik Regency, especially those who are young and in the productive age group, require attention in the form of empowerment programs, access to education, vocational training, and social support to enable them to live more independent and prosperous lives.

Here, the role of Special Schools (SLB) as institutions that train prospective workers with disabilities becomes very important. Unfortunately, many SLB graduates experience a "missing link," namely a mismatch between the skills acquired at school and the actual needs in the work environment. This low level of work readiness is thought to be caused by two main factors that are the focus of this study. First, limitations in soft skills mastery. Soft skills refer to non-technical abilities such as interpersonal communication, team collaboration, leadership, time management, professional ethics, and adaptability (Akbar et al., 2025). However, according to Cahyadi et al (2025), skills are divided into three categories: technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. Second, although social

support is theoretically considered an external element that can strengthen the ability to work. General social support that does not focus specifically on the career context may not improve readiness to enter the workforce. Therefore, low work readiness is not always caused by a lack of social support, but is more influenced by limitations in individual internal factors (Jari & Satwika, 2025).

Several recent studies show that social support plays an important role in improving work readiness. Research conducted by Azzahra and Afrianty (2025), Winata and Saraswati (2022), and Al Hadi and Mariyati (2024) found that assistance from family, friends, and the learning environment has a positive impact on a person's work readiness. This social support helps build confidence, enthusiasm, and mental readiness in transitioning from school to work. On the other hand, employment skills are often considered a key element in career preparation. Studies by Khotimah and Wiyono (2022), Yolanda et al. (2023), and Arham and Nio (2025) show that work skills, including technical and social competencies, positively and significantly influence work readiness. People with good employment skills tend to be more confident, more adaptable, and ready to meet the demands of the job.

However, the results of recent studies also show findings that are not entirely consistent. Lestari and Marsofiyati (2024) show that social support does not have a significant effect on work readiness and may even have a negative effect in certain situations. Similarly, Butar-butur and Wijaya (2025) argue that job skills actually have a negative impact on work readiness. These findings indicate weaknesses in previous research, particularly those related to context, participant characteristics, and varying environmental conditions.

Based on this explanation, a research gap can be identified. There is uncertainty in the results of studies on the impact of social support on work readiness, which shows that the relationship between the two variables cannot be clearly concluded. Furthermore, the variation in results related to the influence of job skills on work readiness shows that these skills do not always contribute positively if they do not match the needs of the workplace.

Based on these differences, this study aims to answer questions related to whether social support and employment skills have an impact on the work readiness of people with disabilities in Gresik Regency. The uniqueness of this study lies in testing these two variables simultaneously in a group of people with disabilities at a special needs school in Gresik Regency using the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) approach, which is expected to provide more appropriate and relevant empirical contributions.

The main theoretical framework underlying this study is the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) introduced by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994. This theory is very important because it provides a detailed explanation of the process of how a person develops interests, sets goals, and ultimately achieves career outcomes, which are influenced by the relationship between personal, environmental, and behavioral factors.

Analysis Method

This study uses quantitative research methods utilizing measurement tools such as questionnaires using a 1–5 Likert scale and statistical analysis to ensure data validity and consistency. The quantitative method was chosen because the focus of this study is on measuring the causal relationship between variables and aims to obtain objective, measurable results that can be applied to the population of persons with disabilities.

According to Hair et al. (2010), "the population refers to all elements or units of analysis that have certain characteristics and are of concern to researchers in drawing conclusions." The population in this study was all persons with disabilities of productive age (17–25 years) who had received job skills training in preparation for entering the labor market. According to Hair et al. (2019), "a sample consists of a number of elements taken from a population and used to reflect the characteristics of that population in a study." The results of Hair et al.'s formula above show that the sample size in this study was 66 respondents. Furthermore, the sampling method used was purposive sampling. The data collection technique in this study used primary and secondary data.

The research instruments were developed based on the indicators for each variable and processed using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method, with the help of smart-PLS to test Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, Composite Reliability, R-Square (R²), Predictive Relevance (Q²), Effect Size (f²), and Hypothesis Testing.

Table 2. Research Variables and Measurement Indicators

Variable	Code	Indicator	Major Reference
Social Support	X1.1	Family Support	(Natasha dan Rahayu, 2025)
	X1.2	Peer Support	
	X1.3	Support from Significant Others	
Employment Skill	X2.1	Basic Literacy Skills	Robbins (Ibrahim, Ilham Fallah, 2018)
	X2.2	Technical Skills	
	X2.3	Interpersonal Skills	
	X2.4	Problem-Solving Skills	
Work Readiness	X3.1	Personal Attributes	Pool and Sawel (Violinda et al., 2023)
	X3.2	Skills	
	X3.3	Knowledge	
	X3.4	Understanding	

Source: Researcher (2025)

Results and Discussion

Research Results

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The convergent validity value is the factor loading value for latent variables and related indicators. Convergent validity is assessed through correlation analysis between item scores and construct scores calculated using PLS. Reflective measures are considered high if there is a correlation greater than 0.60 with the construct being evaluated. In addition, convergent validity can also be evaluated through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct in the model. If the AVE is greater than 0.5, it is considered valid.

Table 3. Outer Model Test

Variable	Instrument	Social Support (X ₁)	Employment Skill (X ₂)	Work Readiness (Y)
Social Support (X ₁)	SS 1.1	0.868		
	SS 1.2	0.788		
	SS 2.1	0.753		
	SS 2.2	0.769		
	SS 3.1	0.817		
	SS 3.2	0.748		
Employment Skill	ES 1.1		0.864	

(X2)	ES 1.2	0.817
	ES 2.2	0.759
	ES 3.1	0.774
	ES 3.2	0.800
	ES 4.1	0.740
	ES 4.2	0.796
Work Readiness (Y)	KK 1.1	0.862
	KK 2.1	0.810
	KK 2.2	0.835
	KK 3.1	0.746
	KK 3.1	0.798

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on the results of Table 2 Outer Loading values, all indicators included in the Social Support (X1), Employment Skill (X2), and Work Readiness (Y) variables showed factor loading values exceeding 0.70. Thus, all indicators have been declared valid and can represent the measured variables well.

Table 4. Composite Reliability and Cronbach alpha

Variable	Composite rho_a	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Social Support (X1)	0.880	0.891	0.626
Employment Skill (X2)	0.902	0.909	0.630
Work Readiness (Y)	0.907	0.910	0.643

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on the results of construct reliability testing, all variables obtained a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.70. This value indicates that all indicators in each variable have a very good level of internal consistency. Meanwhile, the composite reliability value of the three variables is also above 0.70, which reinforces the argument that the construct has reliability and stability in measuring the variables in question. It can be concluded that all constructs in this study meet good reliability standards. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value revealed that each variable exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, with a value of 0.626 for the Social Support variable, 0.630 for the Employment Skill variable, and 0.643 for Work Readiness. Therefore, the three variables in this study meet the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity- Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Variable	Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio
Social Support (X1)	0.709
Employment Skill (X2)	0.572
Work Readiness (Y)	0.884

Source: Processed data, 2025

Inner Model

Based on research by Hair et al. (2019), R-Square (R^2) serves to assess how effectively independent variables can explain dependent variables in the PLS-SEM model. A high R-

Square (R^2) value reflects solid predictive ability. The benchmarks used are: 0.75 for a strong effect, 0.50 for a moderate effect, and 0.25 for a weak effect.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R-Square	Adj. R-Square
Work Readiness	0.659	0.648

Source: Processed data, 2025

According to Hair et al. (2019), the R-Square (R^2) value in this study of 0.659 for the Work Readiness (Y) variable indicates that this model has fairly good predictive power. This is because the R^2 value exceeds 0.50, which is considered a moderate effect, and is close to 0.75, which reflects a strong effect. Therefore, the independent variables in this study are able to explain 65.9% of the variation in work readiness.

Table 7. Stone Geisser Q-Square test (Predictive Relevance)

Variable	Q-Square
Work Readiness	0.659

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on the predictive relevance (Q^2) standard in PLS-SEM, a Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates predictive relevance, while a value close to 1 indicates strong predictive quality, which means that the model applied is adequate and can produce good predictions for Work Readiness.

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2)

Variable	Work Readiness
Social Support (X_1)	0.000
Employment Skill (X_2)	1.141

Source: Processed data, 2025

Based on the results in Table 7, the f^2 value shows that the social support variable does not contribute to explaining the level of work readiness, as the f^2 value is 0.000, indicating no impact. On the other hand, the work skills variable shows an f^2 value of 1.141, indicating a significant influence on work readiness.

Path Coefficients Test

In this study, testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method in the SmartPLS 4.0 application to obtain path coefficient values. Hypothesis testing in PLS-SEM uses the bootstrapping method, which is a technique of sampling from the same data repeatedly. This method produces simulated data that helps researchers understand the pattern of relationships between variables more clearly.

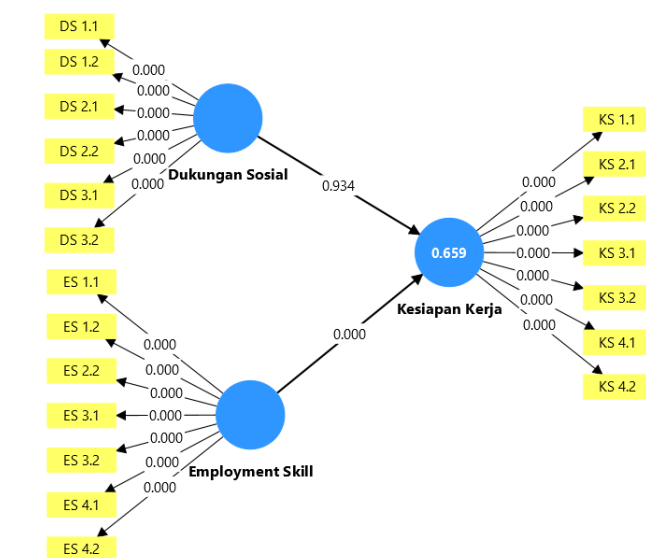


Figure 1. Path Coefficient Model

Source: Processed data, 2025

Table 9. Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	Original Sample	T-Statistics	P-Value
Social Support for Work Readiness (H ₁)	0.010	0.083	0.934
Employment Skills for Work Readiness (H ₂)	0.805	6.309	0.000

Source: Processed data, 2025

Table 8 shows that the t-statistic value for the Social Support variable is 0.083, which is below the t-statistic value of 1.96, and the p-value is 0.934, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that Social Support does not have a significant effect on Work Readiness. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is rejected, leading to the conclusion that Social Support does not play a significant role in Work Readiness. Meanwhile, the Employment Skill variable has a t-statistic value of 6.309, far exceeding the t-statistic value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This shows that Employment Skill has a positive and significant impact on Work Readiness. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, meaning that Employment Skill has a significant influence on Work Readiness.

Discussion

The Relationship between Social Support and Work Readiness

The results of this study indicate that social support does not have a significant effect on work readiness. This is supported by the findings of Mitra and Attiq (2025) that social support does not directly affect work readiness, but works indirectly by increasing self-efficacy and strengthening job training. These results show that emotional support from family, friends, or the social environment alone is not sufficient to increase work readiness, unless there is a real improvement in work ability. In other words, these findings can be conceptually explained through the characteristics of persons with disabilities who, in the context of work readiness, require more structural and functional support. This includes access to training, mastery of skills, and inclusive employment opportunities, rather than just emotional social support. Support from family, friends, and the social environment does play an important psychological role, but it does not necessarily directly improve work readiness if it is not accompanied by a concrete increase in work capacity. In the context of work

readiness for persons with disabilities, social support is more beneficial when it acts as a bridge in the development of work skills and opportunities, rather than as the sole determinant of work readiness.

The Relationship between Employment Skills and Work Readiness

The results of this study prove that employment skills have a positive and significant effect on work readiness. In other words, these findings show that job skills, both technical and non-technical, are an important element in preparing people with disabilities to enter the world of work. Skills such as communication, discipline, cooperation, and technical skills relevant to the field of work have been proven to increase an individual's confidence and readiness to enter the work environment. This is in line with recent research by Omar et al. (2025), which confirms that employability skills are a major factor in increasing the readiness and competitiveness of persons with disabilities in the workplace, as these skills determine an individual's ability to adapt to the needs of the workplace. This finding is supported by Human Capital theory, which highlights that improving individual quality through mastery of skills will boost readiness and competitiveness in the workplace. In the context of disability, this theory emphasises that physical or sensory limitations are not a major obstacle as long as individuals have relevant job skills and are supported by an inclusive work environment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study analyses the influence of social support and employment skills on the work readiness of persons with disabilities in Gresik Regency. The results of the analysis show that employment skills play a significant role in determining the work readiness of persons with disabilities, while social support does not have a significant impact on this readiness. These results explain the research question by indicating that work readiness is driven more by individual abilities and skills than by emotional or relational social support.

From a scientific perspective, this study makes an empirical contribution by expanding the study of work readiness for people with disabilities through the simultaneous testing of social support and employment skills in a single research model. The originality of this study lies in its context in Gresik Regency and the application of the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework to a group of persons with disabilities of productive age. The findings of this study can be used as a reference for special education institutions, job training providers, and policy makers to place greater emphasis on development programmes that improve skills in line with industry demand, in order to promote better and more sustainable work readiness.

This study has several limitations, including a small sample size and a scope that is focused only on Gresik Regency, so the findings of this study cannot be applied generally. In addition, the variables studied are still limited to social support and employment skills, while other factors such as self-confidence, work motivation, self-efficacy, and structural support from industry have not been explored in depth.

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