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The Effect of Work Motivation and *Personal Branding* on *Career Readiness* through LinkedIn Activities as a Mediation Variable

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ABSTRACT

Career readiness is a crucial aspect that students must possess to navigate the professional world. A high level of career readiness can help students adapt to professional demands and increase their chances of securing suitable employment. However, there are still students who have not adequately prepared themselves for their future careers. This study aims to analyze the influence of work motivation and personal branding on career readiness through LinkedIn activity as a mediating variable among undergraduate management students at Surabaya State University. This study employs a quantitative approach involving 150 respondents and was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that work motivation, personal branding, and LinkedIn activity have a positive and significant effect on career readiness. LinkedIn activity was found to mediate the influence of work motivation and personal branding on career readiness.

Keywords: Career Readiness, Work Motivation, Personal Branding, LinkedIn Activiy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of the digital era has driven major changes in the world of work and the need for workforce competencies. The *Future of Jobs Report* shows that in the coming years there will be significant changes in core skills and shifts in different types of jobs, especially the increasing need for professionals in the fields of AI, machine learning, and sustainability (World Economic Forum, 2025). These changes have the potential to tighten labor competition and increase the risk of unemployment if human resources are unable to adapt.

In Indonesia, open unemployment is still a problem, including for university graduates. Data shows that S1 graduates have a relatively high unemployment rate compared to several other levels of education (Central Statistics Agency, 2025). This condition indicates that the possession of an academic degree alone is not enough to ensure readiness to enter the world of work. In addition to technical skills, the industry is now increasingly in need of graduates who have *soft skills* such as communication, collaboration, and work motivation (BRIN, 2024). Many graduates with good academic achievements still do not have adequate career readiness due to low work motivation, lack of experience, and lack of awareness of building *professional personal branding* in the digital era (Azky & Mulyana, 2024). In addition, skills such as leadership and teamwork are also still weaknesses for some new graduates (Furqan Young et al., 2025). The concept of Career Readiness describes the readiness of individuals to enter and develop careers in a sustainable manner through the mastery of core competencies needed in the work environment (NACE, 2022). The *career adaptability* perspective emphasizes the ability to face change, anticipate challenges, and proactively build a professional identity. Therefore, Career Readiness is not only concerned with obtaining a first job, but also includes career planning, self-efficacy, adaptability, decision-making, and digital professional literacy (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021).

Students with high Career Readiness levels generally have clear career goals, confidence, and a strong future orientation. Previous findings show that career self-efficacy and clarity of purpose contribute positively to readiness for a job transition (Monteiro et al., 2022). In addition, modern competencies also include professional communication skills, technology utilization, career management, and digital professional network building (NACE, 2022). Students who actively build a digital professional identity are shown to have better career readiness than those who are

passive (Donald et al., 2019).

In this context, work motivation and *personal branding* are important factors that affect students' career readiness. Work motivation encourages individuals to prepare for the future through improving competence, information seeking, and self-development (Rahmadani & Mardalis, 2022). Meanwhile, *personal branding* functions to build a professional identity so that it is an important part of preparing for job competition (Lailatul Rohma Romadhona et al., 2024).

Technological developments have also made LinkedIn an increasingly influential professional platform. Many recruiters use LinkedIn to review candidate profiles, while the number of users in Indonesia continues to increase (Waalaxy, 2025). Thus, activities on LinkedIn are suspected to be a means of implementing work motivation and *personal branding* that contribute to increasing Career Readiness.

Various previous studies have shown that *personal branding* and work motivation have an effect on job readiness, but most of them still focus on *work readiness* compared to Career Readiness which has a wider scope (Hernanda et al., 2025;). Another study also found that students have a positive perception of LinkedIn, even though its use is still not optimal in supporting career development (Putri et al., 2025). On the other hand, *personal branding* through LinkedIn has been shown to increase professional visibility, but the relationship between work motivation, digital activity, and Career Readiness has not been widely studied (Salma et al., 2024).

LinkedIn activity is estimated to be able to be a mediating variable that explains how work motivation and *personal branding* affect Career Readiness. Professional social media use is known to contribute to building reputation, trust, and access to career opportunities (Roulin & Levashin, 2019). Therefore, this study offers a model that integrates work motivation and *personal branding* with strategic activities on LinkedIn to improve students' Career Readiness. The results of the research are expected to make a theoretical contribution as well as become a practical reference for students and educational institutions in preparing for careers more effectively.

This study aims to analyze the influence of work motivation, *personal branding*, and LinkedIn activities on student Career Resiliency. In addition, the study also aims to examine the influence of work motivation and *personal branding* on LinkedIn activities, as well as analyze the mediating role of LinkedIn activity in the relationship between the two variables and Career Readiness.

This research is limited to active students of the S1 Business Management Study Program, State University of Surabaya class of 2022. The social media activity analyzed focused solely on LinkedIn, including profile management, self-description, content activities, and professional interactions (Louise Lexis et al., 2023). Work motivation is understood as an encouragement that prepares students to face the world of work after completing their education and is associated with increasing Career Readiness (Setiadi Slamet & Sumaryoto, 2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Career Readiness

Career Readiness is a concept that describes an individual's readiness to enter and develop in the world of work through the mastery of relevant knowledge, skills, and character. According to NACE (2022), this concept includes various competencies such as academic and technical skills, *critical thinking*, communication, teamwork, flexibility, and professionalism. In addition, *Career Readiness* also involves mastering *hard skills* and *soft skills* that support a person's success in the work environment (Puspitasari et al., 2025). Camara (2013) explained that readiness is shown through a combination of academic ability, *cross-cutting capabilities*, behavioral skills, and the ability to navigate education and career.

In the context of education, *Career Readiness* is seen as an important provision before entering the world of business and industry because it helps individuals recognize their potential and prepare for steps towards career success (Putri et al., 2022). Moore and Thaller (2023) added that this concept reflects the achievement of competencies that support the effective transition of college graduates to the workforce. On the other hand, Manurung and Prastiani (2025) emphasize that career readiness does not only depend on technical abilities, but also on confidence and a proactive attitude in achieving professional goals.

Based on these various views, *Career Readiness* can be understood as a condition when individuals have sufficient knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes to enter the world of work. For students, this ability plays an important role in supporting the transition process from the academic environment to the professional world so that they are able to adapt and compete in the midst of changing industry needs.

This concept is in line with *the Social Cognitive Theory* put forward by Bandura (1986), where individual behavior is formed through the interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioral factors themselves (*reciprocal determinism*). In this study, the theory was used to explain that *Career Readiness* develops through the relationship between work motivation, *personal branding*, and professional activities on LinkedIn, which represent social, cognitive, and behavioral aspects, respectively.

The *Career Readiness* Indicator in this study refers to a competency framework developed by NACE (2022), a professional organization that focuses on the relationship between higher education and the world of work through career development and graduate recruitment. Based on various surveys of *employers* and educational institutions, NACE formulated eight main competencies needed to support the success of graduates in the world of work.

These competencies include *Career & Self-Development*, which is the ability to manage career development and conduct self-reflection; *Communication*, which is the ability to convey information effectively; *Critical Thinking*, which is the ability to analyze problems and make decisions; *Equity & Inclusion*, which is to respect diversity and support an inclusive environment; *Leadership*, which is the ability to utilize one's and team's

potential to achieve goals; *Professionalism*, which is the application of work ethics and professional responsibility; *Teamwork*, which is the ability to work together effectively; and *Technology*, which is the ethical and productive use of technology to get work done.

The NACE competency framework has been widely used in research on student career readiness, including by Causevic (2022), M. Michael et al. (2018), Moore and Thaller (2023), Rachmawati et al. (2025), and Newell and Ulrich (2022). In this study, variable measurement adopted an instrument developed by Miller (2019) based on the competency framework.

2.2 LinkedIn Activity

LinkedIn is a professional platform launched in 2003 and is designed to support career development through professional profiling, job searches and internships, and professional network expansion (LinkedIn, 2023). As it develops, the number of LinkedIn users continues to increase significantly in various countries (Waalaxy, 2025). According to Putri et al. (2025), this platform provides various important features such as professional profiles in lieu of *curriculum vitae* (CV), *connections* to expand relationships, discussion communities, LinkedIn Jobs, and *endorsements* and *recommendations* that can strengthen user credibility.

LinkedIn activities refer to the use of the platform to build a professional identity, expand the network, and use its various features as a means of long-term career development (Lexis et al., 2023). Utz and Breuer (2019) explained that this activity includes active and passive use aimed at obtaining the benefits of information for career development. Meanwhile, Basak and Calisir (2014) stated that activities on LinkedIn include *self-promotion*, *job affairs*, *group activities*, *professional networking*, and endorsements. For students, these activities are mostly realized through strengthening *personal branding*, optimizing profiles, creating professional content, and increasing attractiveness in the eyes of recruiters (Putri et al., 2025).

This phenomenon can be explained through *the Uses and Gratifications Theory* developed by Blumler and Katz (1974), in which individuals actively choose media to meet their needs. In the use of LinkedIn, these needs include cognitive aspects through the search for career information, integrative-personal aspects through strengthening professional image, and integrative-social aspects through network expansion. Thus, LinkedIn activities can be understood as a strategic effort to utilize professional social media to support career development and increase readiness to enter the world of work.

The measurement of LinkedIn activity in this study refers to the indicators put forward by Utz and Breuer (2019). These indicators include *internal networking*, which is building relationships within the organization; *external networking*, which is establishing relationships with parties outside the organization (Michael & Yukl, 1993); *informational benefits*, namely the use of information about jobs and career opportunities (Holes, 1992); *frequency of reading*, which indicates the intensity of reading uploads on the platform; *frequency of posting*, which describes how often users create content (Utz, 2016); *activity in groups*, which is participation in LinkedIn groups (Utz, 2016); and *professional content*, which reflects the activity of sharing information related to professional achievements, job information, and requests for career advice.

LinkedIn (2025) identifies several components that contribute to the effectiveness of professional profiles. These components include the use of representative profile photos, the preparation of *headlines* that reflect *personal branding*, the use of *name pronunciation* features, the writing of *an About* section that explains career experiences and goals, *networking development*, the inclusion of *skills*, *recommendations*, and *credentials* as proof of competence. In addition, users can also add projects, patents, or publications, actively share *content*, follow relevant industry *influencers*, and use *Service Pages* to display the professional services offered. All of these components serve to strengthen professional identity while increasing opportunities for career and collaboration opportunities.

2.3 Work Motivation

Work motivation is an impulse that comes from internal and external factors that encourage individuals to work and achieve desired goals. High work motivation is related to increasing a person's career readiness and enthusiasm to enter the world of work (Sabrina et al., 2024). Motivation is also a driver for individuals to contribute in the work environment, meet targets, and prepare themselves by improving the competencies needed (Mayhesya et al., 2024). In addition, high motivation encourages individuals to develop abilities, organize themselves more professionally, and utilize external support such as awards and knowledge about the world of work (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Thus, work motivation in this study is understood as internal and external motivation that encourages students to prepare themselves to enter the world of work, including through the use of digital platforms such as LinkedIn to increase *Career Readiness*.

According to Nabawi et al. (2025), work motivation is influenced by external and internal factors. External factors include the social environment, technology and digital accessibility, organizational conditions and culture, work flexibility, career development opportunities, compensation, and the quality of the physical environment. Meanwhile, internal factors include self-development and personal actualization, the need for autonomy and independence, the meaning and purpose of the job, and the need for recognition or appreciation for achievements.

Hasani & Alam (2025) and Supriyanto et al. (2022) explained that work motivation can be measured through four main indicators, namely *Desire And Interest To Enter The Workforce*, which shows a strong willingness to start working; *Hopes and Aspirations to Reach The Future*, in the form of long-term career goals and plans; *Encouragement From The Environment*, which is support from family, friends, and the social environment; and *Personal Physiological Needs*, which is the encouragement to work to meet the needs of life and achieve economic independence.

2.4 Personal Branding

Personal branding is an identity or self-image that is deliberately built to influence the perception of others according to individual goals (Hubert K. Rampersad in Salma et al., 2024). This concept is also seen as a form of *personal brand equity* that includes professional identity, credibility, and visibility (Gorbatov et al., 2019). In addition, *personal branding* is understood as the process of building a self-image through the management of

communication, attitudes, and strategies that are able to show a person's unique values and characteristics so that they have an advantage over others (Putri et al., 2025). Individuals with *good personal branding* generally have confidence, credibility, and strong characteristics (Wibowo & Rimawati, 2024). Therefore, in this study, *personal branding* is interpreted as students' efforts to build a consistent professional identity through behavior, communication, and evidence of competence to support *Career Readiness*.

The concept *of personal branding* is based on *Impression Management Theory* proposed by Erving Goffman (1959). This theory explains that individuals consciously manage the way they present themselves in order to gain acceptance and appreciation from the environment. In a professional context, *personal branding* is the application of this concept through the formation of a positive self-image that is in accordance with values, personality, and career goals, both in direct interaction and through digital media.

Firmansyah (2024) stated that the formation of *personal branding* is influenced by three groups of factors. Internal factors include values, personalities, and skills that reflect an individual's identity and competencies. Process factors include self-reflection to recognize potential, identity communication through behavior and social media, and evaluation of feedback and results obtained to keep the strategy relevant. The external factors consist of the audience, such as colleagues or recruiters, as well as the social and cultural environment that also shapes the perception of a person's professional image.

According to Gorbatov et al. (2019), *personal branding* can be measured through three main indicators. First, *Strategic*, which is self-image management that is carried out in a planned and goal-oriented manner (Parmentier et al., 2013). Second, *Differentiated*, which is the ability to display unique characteristics that distinguish individuals from others and provide added value (Parmentier et al., 2013). Third, *Technologically savvy*, which is the ability to utilize technology and digital media, including the use of profiles, photos, logos, and portfolios on platforms such as LinkedIn, as a means of building and conveying a professional image (van der Land et al., 2016).

3. RESEARCH MEHODOLOGY

This study applies a quantitative approach with the type of explanatory research to test hypotheses through objective numerical data analysis. The quantitative approach was chosen because it is suitable for measuring the relationships between variables using statistical methods, while explanatory research is used to explain the causal relationships and mechanisms that connect the research variables. In this study, the focus of the analysis was directed at the influence of work motivation and personal branding on *Career Readiness* with LinkedIn activities as a mediating variable, so that the study not only describes the phenomenon but also examines the direct and indirect influence between variables (Sugiyono, 2023).

The research was carried out at the Faculty of Economics and Business, S1 Business Management Study Program, State University of Surabaya which is located on Jalan Ketintang, Gayungan District, Surabaya, East Java. The location was chosen because students have a strong career orientation and are required to build personal branding since their studies. The implementation of the research is planned from November 2025 to January 2026, including the preparation of instruments, the distribution of questionnaires, data collection, and the analysis of research results.

Population is all subjects that have characteristics according to the purpose of the research. In this study, the population consists of active students of the S1 Business Management Study Program, State University of Surabaya class of 2022 who are considered to have a career orientation and have begun to be involved in professional development through LinkedIn (Sugiyono, 2023).

Samples were taken from some members of the population using a simple random sampling technique, so that each member had an equal chance to be selected. The determination of the sample count refers to the 10-times rule guideline in the SEM-PLS analysis, which is at least ten times the number of the largest structural paths leading to a construct (Hair et al., 2019).

Primary data was collected using the survey method through the online distribution of questionnaires with Google Forms. The selection of this method is considered efficient to reach a large number of respondents. The distribution of questionnaires is carried out through coordination with the class leader as *a gatekeeper* so that the link can be conveyed to all students of the S1 Business Management Study Program at the State University of Surabaya class of 2022 so that every member of the population has the same opportunity to participate (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data analysis used the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS 4 because it was able to analyze the direct and indirect relationships between variables simultaneously and was suitable for a relatively limited sample size (Hair et al., 2019).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Results

The research data was obtained through the distribution of online questionnaires using *Google Form*. A total of 168 responses were successfully collected, but after going through a *screening proces* based on the completeness of the answers and suitability with the research criteria, only 150 questionnaires were declared worthy of analysis. Furthermore, the data was used to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of research answers.

This study uses *screening questions* to ensure that all respondents meet the criteria that have been determined. Respondents' characteristics were classified by gender and age. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were women as many as 101 people (67.3%), while men amounted to 49 people (32.7%). The dominance of female respondents showed that this group was more involved in research, with possible differences in the use of professional social media and the development of *personal branding* in preparation for entering the workforce.

Judging from age, all respondents were in the range of 21-24 years with the largest distribution at the age of 22 years (34.7%), followed by the age of 21 years (33.3%), while the rest were aged 23 and 24 years. This condition shows that most of the respondents are final year students who are in the transition phase to the world of work so that they begin to improve competence,

expand professional relationships, build *networking*, and prepare *for career readiness* through the use of digital platforms such as *LinkedIn*. In general, the characteristics of the respondents describe the dominance of female students aged 21-24 years who are preparing to enter the career world through skill development, expansion of professional networks, and strengthening *personal branding* and the use of digital media.

Descriptive analysis was carried out using the distribution of frequency, percentage, and mean values of each indicator.

$$\text{Interval Kelas} = \frac{\text{Nilai Tertinggi} - \text{Nilai Terendah}}{\text{Jumlah Kelas}}$$

$$= \frac{5-1}{5} = 0{,}8$$

The category of mean interpretation is determined based on a class interval of 0.8 with a classification reference from Simamora (2005), which ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

The results of the analysis showed that the highest average score was found in item X1.1.2 with a statement about motivation to study harder for job readiness (*mean* = 3,500; category "Agree"). These findings indicate that there is a strong push from students to improve their abilities as a form of preparation for the world of work and support *career readiness*.

In contrast, the lowest average score was found in item X1.3.1 related to the importance of family and friend support in improving career readiness (*mean* = 3,280; category "Neutral"). This shows that although social support is still considered important, respondents tend to prioritize self-development independently in preparing for careers.

In the *Personal Branding variable*, the highest average score was obtained item X2.3.1 regarding the use of professional social media such as *LinkedIn* to introduce abilities and self-profile (*mean* = 3,387; category "Agree"). These results show that students are starting to use *LinkedIn* as a means of building a professional image and preparing themselves for job competition. Meanwhile, the lowest average score was found in item X2.1.1 on efforts to build professional networks with lecturers, alumni, and practitioners (*mean* = 3,227; category "Neutral"). The findings indicate that the development of professional connections is still not the main focus compared to improving skills and *personal branding*.

In the LinkedIn Activity variable, the highest score was found in item Z1.3.1 regarding the use of *LinkedIn* to obtain information on career opportunities (*mean* = 3,420; category "Agree"). This shows that the platform has been used as a source of information to support preparations to enter the world of work.

On the other hand, the lowest score was obtained item Z1.1.1 related to social interaction through *LinkedIn* for professional networking (*mean* = 3,253; category "Neutral"). This condition indicates that students often use *LinkedIn* to search for career information rather than actively engage in *networking* activities.

In the *Career Readiness* variable, the highest average score was found in item Y1.3.2 related to the ability to demonstrate integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior (*mean* = 3,433; category "Agree"). These results show that respondents are aware of the importance of a professional attitude as a provision to enter the world of work, in addition to their academic competence.

In contrast, the lowest average value was found in item Y1.8.1 regarding the ability to leverage technology to solve problems and achieve goals (*mean* = 3,200; category "Neutral"). These findings indicate that the ability to adapt to technology as part of *career readiness* still needs to be improved to match the demands of the increasingly growing world of work.

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4.2 Inferential statistical analysis results

Inferential statistical analysis in this study was used to test the model and the relationships between variables that have been formulated in the research hypothesis. The method used is Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) with the help of SmartPLS 4. Testing is carried out through the evaluation of measurement models (outer models), structural models (inner models), and hypothesis testing to see the direct and indirect influence between research variables.

The evaluation of the outer model is carried out to see the relationship between the indicators and the constructs they measure, so that it can be ensured that the research instrument is valid and reliable in measuring the research variables.

a. Convergent Validity

The convergent validity test aims to ensure that the indicators in a single construct have a strong relationship. The assessment was carried out through outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Hair et al. (2019), the indicator is said to be valid if it has an outer loading > 0.70, while the AVE value is at least 0.50.

Table 4. 1 Recapitulation of Convergent Validity Results

Variable	Lowest Outer Loading	Highest Outer Loading	AVE	Remarks
Work Motivation (X1)	0.781	0.872	0.672	Valid
Personal Branding (X2)	0.765	0.840	0.628	Valid
LinkedIn Activity (Z)	0.725	0.894	0.642	Valid

Career Readiness (Y)	0.774	0.839	0.682	Valid

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by Researcher)

The results of data processing showed that all indicators in the variables Work Motivation, Personal Branding, LinkedIn Activity, and Career Readiness had met these criteria, so that all indicators were declared valid and none were eliminated.

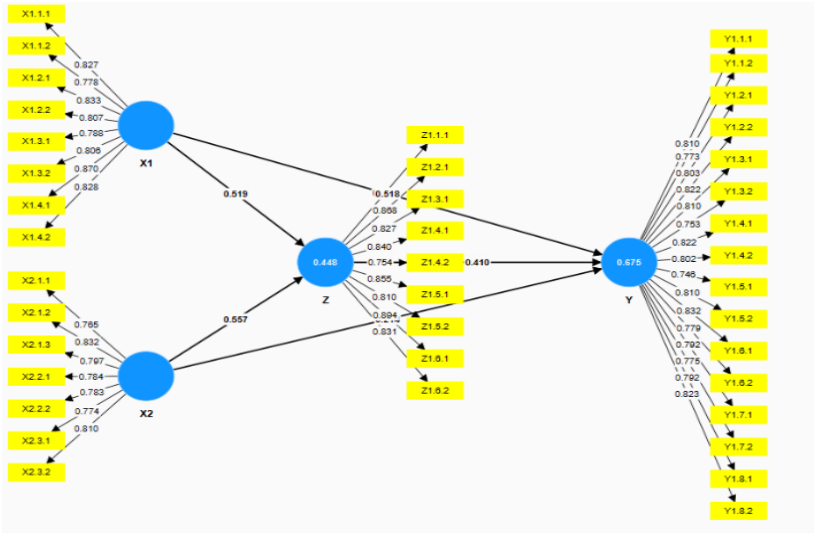


Figure 4.1 Measurement Model

The recapitulation results show that all variables have an outer loading value above 0.70 and AVE above 0.50, which means that the entire construct is able to explain more than half of the variance of the indicator. Work Motivation has AVE 0.672, Personal Branding 0.628, LinkedIn Activity 0.642, and Career Readiness 0.682. Thus, all variables meet convergent validity according to the standards of Hair et al. (2019), so that the indicators are suitable for use in the research model.

The discriminant validity test is carried out to ensure that each construct has different characteristics and does not overlap with each other. Testing is carried out through cross loading and HTMT. The results of cross loading showed that each indicator had the highest value in its respective constructs compared to other constructs, so that all constructs were declared to meet the discriminant validity.

Table 4. 2 Cross Loading Results

Item	Work Motivation	*Personal Branding*	LinkedIn Activity	*Career Readiness*
X1.1.1	0.824	-0.198	0.321	0.550
X1.1.2	0.781	-0.221	0.348	0.503
X1.2.1	0.847	-0.165	0.301	0.530
X1.2.2	0.808	-0.229	0.338	0.509
X1.3.1	0.785	-0.171	0.267	0.488
X1.3.2	0.807	-0.149	0.289	0.516
X1.4.1	0.872	-0.263	0.269	0.495
X1.4.2	0.829	-0.254	0.339	0.521
X2.1.1	-0.088	0.765	0.358	0.318
X2.1.2	-0.205	0.840	0.375	0.246
X2.1.3	-0.209	0.793	0.272	0.200
X2.2.1	-0.230	0.778	0.249	0.156
X2.2.2	-0.205	0.779	0.400	0.174
X2.3.1	-0.307	0.770	0.339	0.126
X2.3.2	-0.196	0.818	0.323	0.235
Z1.1.1	0.238	0.316	0.725	0.443
Z1.2.1	0.369	0.354	0.865	0.609
Z1.3.1	0.300	0.382	0.825	0.647
Z1.4.1	0.334	0.358	0.840	0.609

Item	Work Motivation	*Personal Branding*	LinkedIn Activity	*Career Readiness*
Z1.4.2	0.358	0.263	0.778	0.548
Z1.5.1	0.252	0.379	0.851	0.560
Z1.5.2	0.305	0.320	0.809	0.583
Z1.6.1	0.357	0.368	0.894	0.619
Z1.6.2	0.289	0.412	0.830	0.627
Y1.1.1	0.442	0.267	0.600	0.819
Y1.1.2	0.518	0.198	0.528	0.774
Y1.2.1	0.533	0.182	0.589	0.816
Y1.2.2	0.480	0.266	0.654	0.831
Y1.3.1	0.471	0.194	0.527	0.811
Y1.3.2	0.466	0.143	0.546	0.761
Y1.4.1	0.516	0.218	0.582	0.820
Y1.4.2	0.553	0.171	0.531	0.803
Y1.5.1	0.337	0.332	0.548	0.752
Y1.5.2	0.553	0.212	0.588	0.807
Y1.6.1	0.499	0.244	0.614	0.839
Y1.6.2	0.527	0.248	0.565	0.787
Y1.7.1	0.507	0.274	0.613	0.809
Y1.7.2	0.544	0.157	0.501	0.776
Y1.8.1	0.558	0.140	0.523	0.789
Y1.8.2	0.533	0.222	0.582	0.825

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

Table 4. 3 HTMT Results

Construct Pairs	*Heterotrai monotrait ratio* (HTMT)
Variable X2 <-> Variable X1	0.283
Variable Y <-> Variable X1	0.662
Variable Y <-> Variable X2	0.282
Variable Z <-> Variable X1	0.402
Variable Z <-> Variable X2	0.452
Variable Z <-> Variable Y	0.742

In addition, the HTMT value of the entire variable pair was below 0.90, as explained by Hair et al. (2019), so it can be concluded that each construct has a clear difference and there is no problem of discriminant validity in the research model.

Reliability tests are carried out to ensure the consistency of research instruments (Sugiyono, 2023). The test uses Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Based on Ghozali (2023), the construct is declared reliable if the value of the two indicators is more than 0.70.

Table 4. 4 Reliability Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	*Composite Reliability*
Work Motivation	0.930	0.930
Personal Branding	0.901	0.908
LinkedIn Activity	0.963	0.963
Career Readiness	0.941	0.944

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

The results of the study show that all variables have values above this limit, so it can be concluded that the research instrument has good consistency and is suitable for use in follow-up analysis.

Internal model evaluation is used to test the relationship between constructs as well as hypothesis testing. Evaluation was carried out through path coefficient, R^2, f^2, Q^2, and SRMR (Hair et al., 2019). Path coefficient testing was carried out using bootstrapping to see the significance of the relationship between variables through t-statistics and p-values (Ghozali, 2023). The results of the study showed that the entire relationship between variables was significant. Work Motivation has a positive effect on Career Readiness and LinkedIn Activities, Personal Branding also has a significant effect on these two variables, and LinkedIn Activities have a positive effect on Career Readiness.

Table 4. 5 Path Coefficient

Influence Relationships	Path coefficient	T-statistic	P-values	Remarks
Variable X1 -> Variable Y	0.530	9.331	0.000	Significant
Variable X1 -> Variable Z	0.519	9.514	0.000	Significant
Variable X2 -> Variable Y	0.228	3.786	0.000	Significant
Variable X2 -> Variable Z	0.557	9.638	0.000	Significant
Variable Z -> Variable Y	0.412	6.695	0.000	Significant

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

Table 4. 6 R-Square

Affected variables	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Career Readiness	0.688	0.681
LinkedIn Activity	0.433	0.426

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

The R^2 value is used to see the ability of independent variables to explain dependent variables (Hair et al., 2019). The results showed that Career Readiness had an R^2 of 0.688 (moderate category), while LinkedIn Activity was 0.433 (moderate category). This shows that the research model has a fairly good predictive ability in explaining dependent variables. The f^2 test was used to see the magnitude of the contribution of independent variables (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. 7 F-Square

Variable Relationships	F-Square	Influence
Work Motivation -> *Career Readiness*	0.583	Large
Work Motivation -> Linkedin Activities	0.445	Large
Personal Branding -> *Career Readiness*	0.103	Small
Personal Branding -> LinkedIn Activity	0.512	Large
LinkedIn Activities -> *Career Readiness*	0.309	Medium

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

The results showed that Work Motivation had a large influence on Career Readiness and LinkedIn Activity, Personal Branding had a small to large influence depending on the relationship, while LinkedIn Activity had a moderate influence on Career Readiness.

The Q^2 value is used to look at the predictive relevance model (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. 8 Q2 Predictive Relevance

Variable	Q^2 /q^2
Career Readiness	0.434
LinkedIn Activity	0.288

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

The results showed that Career Readiness (0.434) and LinkedIn Activity (0.288) had values above 0, so the model had good predictive ability.

SRMR is used to assess the model's suitability with the data (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. 9 Model Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.053	0.053

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

The results showed an SRMR value of 0.053 which was smaller than 0.08, so the model was declared to have a good goodness of fit.

Hypothesis testing using SmartPLS 4 bootstrapping showed that the entire hypothesis was accepted because it had t-statistics > 1.96 and p-values < 0.05.

Table 4. 10 Hypothesis Test

Relationships Between Variables	*Original sample*	*Sample mean*	STDEV	t-statistics	p values
Variable X1 -> Variable Y	0.530	0.534	0.057	9.331	0.000
Variable X1 -> Variable Z	0.519	0.521	0.055	9.514	0.000
Variable X2 -> Variable Y	0.228	0.231	0.060	3.786	0.000
Variable X2 -> Variable Z	0.557	0.562	0.058	9.638	0.000
Variable Z -> Variable Y	0.407	0.062	6.695	0.000	0.407

Source: Smart PLS 4 (Processed by researcher)

Table 4. 11 Summary of Hypothetical Results

Hypothesis	Influence	Results
H1: Work Motivation has a Positive Effect on *Career Readiness*	Significant	Accepted
H2: *Personal Branding* has a Positive Effect on *Career Readiness*	Significant	Accepted
H3: LinkedIn activity has a positive effect on *Career Readiness*	Significant	Accepted
H4: Work Motivation has a Positive Effect on LinkedIn Activities	Significant	Accepted
H5: *Personal Branding* has a positive effect on LinkedIn Activities	Significant	Accepted
H6: LinkedIn activity mediates the influence of Work Motivation on *Career Readiness*	Significant	Accepted
H7: LinkedIn activity mediates the influence of *personal branding* on *Career Readiness.*	Significant	Accepted

Work Motivation and Personal Branding have been proven to have a positive effect on Career Readiness and LinkedIn Activities, and LinkedIn Activities have an effect on Career Readiness. These results show that the entire relationship between variables is significant.

The results of the mediation test showed that LinkedIn Activity played a role as a mediating variable in the relationship between Work Motivation and Personal Branding to Career Readiness. The indirect influence of both is significant, so it can be concluded that the higher the Work Motivation and Personal Branding, the more active the use of LinkedIn which ultimately increases Career Readiness. These findings suggest that LinkedIn's mediation role is significant in the research model.

4.3 Discussion of Testing Hypothesis Results

The results of the study show that Work Motivation has a positive and significant influence on students' Career Reabilitacy. This means that the higher the work motivation that students have, the more career readiness they have. Work motivation encourages students to be more active in developing competencies, seeking career information, and preparing future planning in a more targeted manner. The internal drive to achieve career goals also makes students better prepared to face the transition from the academic world to the professional world.

The results of descriptive statistics reinforce these findings, where the most dominant aspect of work motivation is seen in the

encouragement to study harder for work readiness (mean 3,500), followed by a sense of responsibility for the future of the career (mean 3,447). Meanwhile, environmental support is still perceived as important even though it is not a major factor. In the Career Readiness variable, the highest indicators were attitudes of integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior (mean 3,433), which indicates that good work motivation contributes to the formation of students' professional attitudes. These findings are in line with the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1986) which explains the interaction between personal, environmental, and behavioral factors. These results are also consistent with research by Supriyanto et al. (2022), Rosyada and Suratman (2025), Rasyid Syamsuri and Junaidi (2025), and Amri and Irwanto (2021) which emphasized that work motivation affects career readiness.

The results of the study show that Personal Branding has a positive and significant effect on students' Career Reaper. The better the personal branding that is built, the higher the career readiness of students. Personal branding helps students understand their potential, increase their confidence, and build the professional identity needed in the world of work.

Based on descriptive statistics, the use of professional networks (mean 3,227) is the lowest indicator, although it remains in the positive category. Meanwhile, the use of professional social media such as LinkedIn (mean 3,387) was the highest indicator, followed by sharing academic activities or projects (mean 3,320). This shows the tendency of students to use digital media to build a professional image. The Career Readiness variable also showed a high score in the integrity aspect (mean 3.433). These findings are in line with Goffman's Impression Management Theory which explains the management of self-impression in social interactions. Research by Turner Henderson et al. (2025), Hernanda et al. (2025), and Salma et al. (2024) also supports the results that personal branding plays a role in student job readiness.

The results of the study show that LinkedIn Activities have a positive and significant effect on Career Readiness. The more active students are in using LinkedIn, the higher their career readiness. Activities such as searching for career information, keeping up with professional development, and networking help students gain a broader perspective on the world of work.

Descriptive results show that LinkedIn is most used to search for career opportunities (mean 3,420) and read professional content regularly (mean 3,373), while professional network interactions have the lowest score (mean 3,253). This shows that LinkedIn is more used as a source of information than social interaction. This condition is relevant to the characteristics of final semester students who are starting to focus on career preparation. Blumer & Katz's (1974) Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that media is used to meet information needs and self-development. Research by Jian et al. (2025) and Louise Lexis et al. (2023) also reinforces that professional platforms support individual career readiness. Work Motivation has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on LinkedIn Activities. The higher the students' motivation at work, the more actively they use LinkedIn to find information and develop themselves. This shows that career encouragement encourages the use of digital platforms as a means of preparation for the world of work.

This finding is supported by an f-square value of 0.445 which belongs to the large category, showing a strong influence. Descriptive statistics also show that LinkedIn is widely used to search for information on career opportunities. Research by Masciantonio and Bourguignon (2023) supports these findings by explaining that motivation drives the use of social media for specific purposes, including career development.

The results of the study show that Personal Branding has a positive and significant effect on LinkedIn Activities. Students with good personal branding tend to be more active in using LinkedIn to build a professional image, share experiences, and expand their career network.

This is reinforced by an f^2 value of 0.512 which belongs to the large category, showing a strong contribution. These activities include profile updates, publication of academic experience, and professional interactions. Research by Zhao Xin (2021) and Marin and Nila (2021) also shows that LinkedIn plays a role in the development of personal branding and individual professional perception.

The results showed that LinkedIn Activity was able to mediate the influence of Work Motivation on Career Readiness positively and significantly with a coefficient of 0.214, t-statistics 5.733, and p-value of 0.000. This shows that Work Motivation not only has a direct impact, but also through increased LinkedIn activity. Students who have high work motivation tend to be more active in seeking career information, following professional developments, and developing work insights through LinkedIn. This activity helps them understand the needs of the world of work so as to increase career readiness. Thus, LinkedIn becomes a medium that bridges motivation into real actions in career development.

The results showed that LinkedIn activity mediated the influence of Personal Branding on Career Readiness with a coefficient of 0.229, t-statistics 4.989, and p-value of 0.000. This shows that the influence of personal branding on career readiness can be strengthened through LinkedIn activities.

Students who have good personal branding tend to actively update their profiles, share experiences, and follow professional developments. This activity increases understanding of the world of work while strengthening career readiness. Thus, LinkedIn becomes a means of implementing personal branding in the context of real career development.

Overall, all hypotheses in this study are accepted. Work Motivation, Personal Branding, and LinkedIn Activities contribute to increasing students' Career Resiliency. Work Motivation was the variable with the most influence (f^2 0.583), followed by LinkedIn Activity (f^2 0.309), while Personal Branding still contributed even though it was smaller. In addition, Personal Branding has a stronger influence on LinkedIn Activities than Work Motivation.

The findings also show that LinkedIn Activity plays a role as a mediating variable that strengthens the influence of Work Motivation and Personal Branding on Career Readiness. Thus, a student's career readiness is determined not only by internal factors, but also by their involvement in professional activities through digital platforms.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that Work Motivation and Personal Branding have an influence on Career Readiness through LinkedIn Activities in S1 Management students of the State University of Surabaya. First, Work Motivation has a positive and

significant effect on Career Readiness, which means that the higher the work motivation of students, the higher their readiness to face the world of work and career development. Second, Personal Branding also has a positive and significant effect on Career Readiness, so that students' ability to build a good professional image will increase their career readiness.

Third, LinkedIn activities have a positive and significant effect on Career Readiness, where the more active students are in using LinkedIn for professional activities, the higher the level of career readiness they have. Fourth, Work Motivation has a positive and significant effect on LinkedIn Activities, meaning that students who have high work motivation tend to be more active in using LinkedIn to support career development. Fifth, Personal Branding also has a positive and significant effect on LinkedIn activities, so the better the personal branding that students have, the higher their involvement in professional activities on LinkedIn.

Sixth, LinkedIn Activities are able to mediate the influence of Work Motivation on Career Readiness, which shows that high work motivation encourages increased activity on LinkedIn so that it has an impact on increasing career readiness. Seventh, LinkedIn activities also mediate the influence of Personal Branding on Career Readiness, so that good personal branding will increase LinkedIn activities which ultimately strengthen students' Career Readiness.

The results of this study contribute to the development of Career Readiness studies in students, by showing that in addition to internal factors such as Work Motivation and Personal Branding, involvement in LinkedIn Activities also has an important role. This study also clarifies the role of LinkedIn Activity as a mediating variable that connects Work Motivation and Personal Branding to Career Readiness, thereby strengthening the importance of integrating individual factors and utilizing digital professional platforms in student career readiness.

5.2 Recommendations

For students, increasing Work Motivation, strengthening Personal Branding, and actively utilizing LinkedIn are needed to support career development. LinkedIn is not only used to find job information, but also to build professional profiles, expand networks, and keep up with the world of work so that it can increase Career Readiness. For the University, development programs such as Personal Branding training, LinkedIn management, career competency improvement, and other activities that support students' readiness to enter the world of work, including encouraging the optimal use of professional platforms. For Companies and Recruiters, student activities on LinkedIn and Personal Branding can be considered in the recruitment process because it provides an overview of the candidate's competence, experience, and job readiness.

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