Strategic Human Capital Management for Improving Staff Competencies: A Case Study of Universitas Padjadjaran's Effort to Increase International University Ranking

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Abstract

Internationalization is a strategic priority for universities seeking to strengthen their global standing, yet key research gaps persist. Existing studies predominantly focus on academic staff, policy, governance, or leadership, while the operational role of non-academic staff remains underexplored. Research on administrative capacity rarely integrates behavioral competency frameworks or aligns findings with strategic human capital management (SHCM). Systematic models such as the iceberg model are also seldom applied. Empirical evidence from Indonesian universities is particularly limited, especially studies combining competency gap analysis with strategic human capital formulation. This reveals a clear gap in linking non-academic staff readiness to internationalization goals through a competency-based approach. Addressing this gap, this study examines the readiness of non-academic staff at Universitas Padjadjaran, which targets a QS Top 300 ranking by 2029. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, a validated 72-item survey of 113 staff members was complemented by follow-up interviews. Findings indicate strong behavioral readiness but gaps in operational competencies, suggesting that constraints are primarily organizational. A strategic human capital management roadmap is therefore proposed to align HR practices with internationalization objectives.

Kata kunci: internationalization readiness, human capital, competency framework, non-academic staff, university internationalization.

Manajemen Modal Manusia Strategis untuk Meningkatkan Kompetensi Pegawai: Studi Kasus tentang Usaha Universitas Padjadjaran untuk Meningkatkan Ranking Universitas Internasional

Abstrak

Internasionalisasi merupakan prioritas strategis bagi perguruan tinggi dalam memperkuat posisi globalnya, namun sejumlah kesenjangan riset masih ada. Penelitian yang ada umumnya berfokus pada dosen, kebijakan, tata kelola, atau kepemimpinan, sementara peran operasional tenaga kependidikan masih kurang mendapat perhatian. Studi mengenai kapasitas administrasi jarang mengintegrasikan kerangka kompetensi perilaku atau mengaitkan temuan dengan strategic human capital management (SHCM). Selain itu, model sistematis seperti iceberg model juga jarang digunakan. Bukti empiris dari perguruan tinggi di Indonesia masih terbatas, khususnya penelitian yang mengombinasikan analisis kesenjangan kompetensi dengan perumusan strategi human capital. Kondisi ini menunjukkan adanya celah dalam menghubungkan kesiapan tenaga kependidikan dengan tujuan internasionalisasi melalui pendekatan berbasis kompetensi. Menanggapi celah tersebut, penelitian ini mengkaji kesiapan tenaga kependidikan di Universitas Padjadjaran yang menargetkan peringkat QS Top 300 pada 2029. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain mixed-methods deskriptif berurutan, dengan survei tervalidasi berisi 72 butir kepada 113 responden yang dilengkapi wawancara tindak lanjut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kesiapan perilaku yang kuat, namun masih terdapat kesenjangan pada kompetensi operasional, yang mengindikasikan bahwa hambatan utama bersumber dari sistem organisasi. Oleh karena itu, dirumuskan sebuah peta jalan strategic human capital management untuk menyelaraskan praktik SDM dengan tujuan internasionalisasi institusi.).

Keywords: *kesiapan internasional, human capital, kerangka kompetensi, tenaga kependidikan, internasionalisasi perguruan tinggi.*

Introduction

The global landscape of higher education is increasingly competitive. It encourages universities to expand their influence, reputation, and collaboration beyond national borders. In this context, internationalization has become a common institutional strategic approach that integrates international cooperation, intercultural relations, and global dimensions into teaching, research, and community engagement (de Wit & Hunter, 2023). Contemporary perspectives emphasize that internationalization is no longer limited to student and staff mobility, but has evolved into broader and more sustained efforts such as internationalization at home, collaborative research networks, joint and dual-degree programs, international curriculum design, and long-term institutional partnerships (Soulé et al., 2024; Do Hong et al., 2024; Chan, 2022). These initiatives are increasingly linked to institutional quality improvement, global competitiveness, and the development of graduates capable of contributing to diverse and interconnected environments (Amzat et al., 2023).

Global university rankings—particularly the QS World University Rankings (QS WUR) and the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings—have reinforced the importance of internationalization. These systems evaluate several indicators including international student and staff ratios, research collaboration networks, international reputation, and academic partnerships, creating the perception that strong international performance is associated with institutional prestige, competitiveness, and global visibility (Hazelkorn, 2025). In Indonesia, especially during President Joko Widodo's tenure, the government encouraged universities to strengthen their international standing through the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework (Kemdiktisaintek, 2023). With Universitas Padjadjaran currently ranked 515th in QS WUR and aiming for the Top 300 by 2029, the institution must accelerate its internationalization efforts.

Although discussions regarding internationalization often emphasize the role of faculty members, the effectiveness of international programs depends heavily on non-academic staff. They manage administrative functions that facilitate student exchange, global academic initiatives, international admissions, financial and legal procedures, visas services, and culturally responsive support services. However, as is common in many universities, capacity-building initiatives are still primarily intended for academic staff, leaving competency gaps among non-academic personnel. Without robust administrative support, international programs may encounter operational challenges, delays, and reduced efficiency. This means that non-academic staff competencies represent not only operational quality but also a strategic necessity for achieving internationalization goals.

Existing literature on higher education internationalization has evolved significantly over the past decade. De Wit and Jones (2022) highlight a shift toward more inclusive and collaborative forms of internationalization, moving beyond traditional mobility-centered approaches. At the same time, many studies examine internationalization at the institutional level without explicitly distinguishing between academic and non-academic staff. Nevertheless, studies from Vietnam, Denmark, and Spain emphasize the importance of leadership commitment, governance coherence, and the role of human resource information systems in supporting global engagement (Hoai et al., 2023; Brøgger et al., 2023; Ramírez & Tejada, 2022). These institutional factors directly shape how administrative and support functions operate in international contexts. Complementary evidence from Latin America underscores the influence of human and structural capital on institutional performance, showing that competency frameworks and organizational commitment act as mediating factors in achieving global objectives (Melo et al., 2021; 2022). In developing countries, internationalization is also positioned as a strategy for modernization, although persistent gaps in administrative capacity, funding structures, and HR readiness continue to constrain implementation (Fan, 2022; Amirudin, 2025).

These theoretical developments are complemented by a number of foundational frameworks that are relevant to competency assessment. Human capital theory underscores the importance of investing in knowledge, skills, and

traits that influence performance. Strategic human capital management (SHCM) highlights the integrative approach that aligns recruitment, training, performance systems, and career development with organizational long-term objectives. The iceberg model of competency (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) divides competencies into surface-level (knowledge and skills) and deeper-layer (self-concept, traits, motives) that drive performance and adaptability, especially in the global context. Other perspectives provide additional grounding, including global mindset, cultural intelligence (CQ), and motivation theories. Global mindset reflects the ability to interpret and respond to complex cross-border contexts (Javidan & Walker, 2013), while cultural intelligence enables individuals to interact effectively in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003). Motivation theories emphasize the importance of intrinsic drivers such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These frameworks collectively establish the relevance of psychological readiness, cultural adaptability, and behavioral flexibility in internationalization.

Despite this body of literature, several gaps remain. Much of the existing research focuses on academic staff, policy frameworks, governance reforms, or leadership roles. As a result, the operational contribution of non-academic staff is underexplored. Studies that examine administrative capacity often do not integrate behavioral competency frameworks or align their findings with SHCM principles. Existing work also seldom utilizes a systematic competency model such as the iceberg model to assess readiness for internationalization. Furthermore, empirical studies evaluating non-academic staff readiness in Indonesian universities remain limited, particularly studies that combine competency gap analysis and strategic human capital development plan. Thus, a clear gap exists: the lack of competency-based assessment that connects readiness of non-academic staff with internationalization goals.

Given this context, the guiding research question for this study is: How can Universitas Padjadjaran strategically enhance the competencies of non-academic personnel to support internationalization? This question directs the development of a competency-based strategic human capital management framework that aligns human capital interventions with the institution's global ambitions.

Method

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach. The quantitative phase generated the main results. The qualitative phase confirmed and clarified those results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Meydan & Akkas, 2024). The overall process combined literature review, competency framework development, a survey, interviews, and document analysis.

The first step was the development of the synthesized competency framework. The framework was built from prior research, the QS WUR indicators 2024, policy documents, benchmarking with other universities, and short preliminary interviews. The iceberg model was chosen because it can combine technical and behavioral dimensions and is aligned with the strategic direction of the organization—which ultimately serves as a more comprehensive approach.

The iceberg model was developed by McClelland in 1973, and it was further structured by Spencer and Spencer in 1993. It represents employee competencies in a layered structure. Only knowledge and skills—the surface-level competencies—are immediately apparent and readily developable. Deeper factors such as self-concept, traits, and underlying motivations are concealed and exert a more significant influence on long-term success. Individuals can acquire new knowledge and enhance existing skills through formal education, training, and consistent practice. Self-concept affects confidence and role recognition; traits reflect stable behavioral tendencies; and motives determine perseverance and work priorities.

It is more challenging to assess and modify these fundamental components. This concept elucidates why non-academic university staffs are unable to readily acquire the skills necessary to perform their duties through technical

training alone. To work effectively with individuals from different nations, they must also demonstrate cultural awareness, adaptability, proactive communication, and willingness to collaborate.

The iceberg model assists organizations in developing more comprehensive development strategies that encompass technical training, mentorship, experiential learning, and reflective practices. This facilitates the gradual development of organizational capacity in alignment with internationalization objectives. Drawing on the synthesized competency framework and the iceberg model, a 72-item questionnaire was designed and distributed to 113 non-academic staff members from different administrative units at Universitas Padjadjaran. Reliability and validity testing confirmed that the instrument met psychometric standards (Hair et al., 2019; Colledani et al., 2024). The survey results were used to describe readiness levels, calculate competency gaps, and classify respondents into different readiness groups through cluster analysis.

The survey instrument was intentionally designed with varied Likert scales across clusters. This approach was not applied randomly but was based on theoretical and psychological considerations within the framework of the iceberg model, which differentiates between surface-level competencies—such as knowledge and skills—and deeper competencies such as self-concept, personality traits, and motives. Because each domain possesses its own psychological characteristics, a uniform Likert scale would not accurately capture the nature of each competency. Instead, the 1–7 scale in each cluster uses tailored wording to reflect what is being measured; knowledge is described using terms such as 'understand' and 'apply'; skills emphasize independent execution and adaptability; while self-concept focuses on personal belief and role confidence. This structure helps respondents interpret each scale in accordance with the domain being assessed.

The domain-based scale construction aligns with established psychological taxonomies (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl et al., 1964; McClelland, 1973). These taxonomies suggest that cognitive, dispositional, and motivational processes should be measured through multiple, varied scale. Thus, the use of varied Likert descriptions does not weaken the instrument—rather, it captures the depth of the competency model and strengthens the measurement accuracy regarding individual readiness for internationalization. This methodological choice enhances content validity, minimizes response bias, and provides a more precise basis for assessing competency gaps between current conditions and the ideal level required for global transformation. In this way, the varied Likert scales serve as a core strength of the instrument, accurately reflecting the structure of the iceberg model and the psychological readiness needed to support internationalization.

Table 1. Comparison of Likert Scale Descriptions Across Competency Clusters Based on the Iceberg Model

Iceberg cluster	Measurement focus	Psychological nature	Key scale terms	Development characteristics
Knowledge	Level of understanding	Cognitive (knowledge)	understand, apply, master	Can be learned
Skills	Ability to perform tasks	Psychomotor	perform, independent, expert	Can be trained
Self-concept	Self-belief & confidence in one's abilities	Affective (self & mindset)	believe, confident, possess	Formed through experience
Traits	Habits & behavioral tendencies	Dispositional/ personality	reflects me, habitual, natural trait	Tend to be stable
Motives	Drive to act	Intrinsic motivation	drive, initiative, inspiring	Drives active behavior

Tabel 2. Likert Scale Interpretation

Score	Interpretation
1	Not relevant/not clear/not representative
2	Slightly relevant/slightly clear/slightly representative
3	Relevant/clear/representative
4	Highly relevant/highly relevant/highly representative

Table 3. Summary of Item-Total Correlation Results

Indicator	Result
Total items tested	72
Items valid ($r \geq .30$)	72 (100%)
Items highly valid ($r \geq .50$)	72 100%)

Prior to data collection, the instrument was validated through expert consultation. Two specialists were selected based on their expertise in higher education internationalization and competency-based human resource development. Each expert was asked to assess the twelve competencies and their corresponding behavioral indicators (36 items) in accordance with three validation criteria: 1) relevance: the degree to which the item reflects the intended competency; 2) clarity: the degree to which the item is clearly stated and free from ambiguity, and; 3) representativeness: the extent to which the item adequately covers the domain of the competency.

A four-point Likert scale was used to avoid neutral responses. Experts were provided with a comment section for each competency to suggest revisions. Validity testing in this research confirmed that all 72 items were valid. Pearson correlation between items and total scores were calculated ($r > .30$).

The validity test using item-total correlation showed that all 72 items were valid. All Pearson correlation values exceeding the minimum threshold of $r \geq .30$. Moreover, the analysis revealed that all items also surpassed the stronger threshold of $r \geq .50$, indicating very high construct validity. These results demonstrated that every item in the instrument contributes positively to measuring its respective competency dimension and is statistically aligned with the overall construct being assessed. According to methodological standards (Hair et al., 2019; Sugiyono, 2021), this confirms that the instrument items are consistently valid and relevant for evaluating international readiness among non-academic staff. Therefore, the questionnaire developed in this research demonstrates sound psychometric properties and can confidently be used for further analysis, benchmarking, and strategic human capital planning. Reliability testing shows that all 12 dimensions demonstrated Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha \geq .70$, indicating good internal consistency.

The reliability test using Cronbach's alpha showed that all 12 competency dimensions exceeded the threshold of .70. This confirmed excellent internal consistency of the instrument. The alpha values range from .895 to .956, which

Table 4. Cronbach's alpha per competency dimension

Competency dimension	α	No. of items	Competency dimension	α	No. of items
Attention to detail	.956	3	Continuous learning & innovation	.933	3
Customer orientation	.952	3	Global & sustainability mindset	.915	3
English proficiency	.942	3	Event & protocol management	.913	3
International procedures & policies	.941	3	Change agility & adaptability	.898	3
Intl project administration & finance	.938	3	Digital & data literacy	.895	3
Intercultural communication	.936	3			
Initiative & accountability	.936	3			

indicates that the items within each competency reliably measured the same construct. According to methodological standards (Hair et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018), values above .70 are acceptable and values above .90 are classified as excellent. These results demonstrated strong measurement stability.

The results also confirmed that each competency dimension consists of three well-aligned indicators, which support the validity of the competency framework as a structured and measurable model for assessing international readiness among non-academic staff. Therefore, the instrument developed in this study can be considered psychometrically robust and suitable for further applications such as performance evaluation, competency development planning, and strategic SHCM implementation across different units within the university.

Brief semi-structured interviews were then conducted with selected managers, staff, and key leaders of the university. These interviews helped verify whether the survey findings matched actual operational conditions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Busetto et al., 2020). They provided explanations for the gaps and showed that tasks related to internationalization were still not fully supported by structured HR systems. Survey data, interview insights, and documents such as job descriptions, training records, HR policies, and international office guidelines were triangulated to ensure accuracy and contextual grounding (Patton, 1999; Ruslin et al., 2022). The triangulation supported the interpretation of the results and the identification of structural issues. Finally, a Strategic Human Capital Management roadmap was formulated. The roadmap linked the identified competency gaps to key HR domains: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and career development. Overall, the method ensured that the competency assessment was empirical, contextually relevant, and closely aligned with the university's internationalization goals.

Results

Results were presented according to the iceberg model layers and the cluster analysis of readiness profiles. The analysis of competency gaps showed a clear pattern: the visible layers of the iceberg model—knowledge and skills—showed the largest gaps. In contrast, the deeper layers—self-concept, traits, and motives—were relatively stronger. Overall, non-academic staff at Universitas Padjadjaran demonstrate positive behavioral readiness, exhibiting motivation, service orientation, adaptability, and initiative. These strengths suggest that barriers to international readiness are not attitudinal in nature.

Table 5. Competency Gap Across Iceberg Layers

Iceberg model	Competency dimension	Actual M	Ideal M	Gap
Knowledge	International procedures and institutional policies	4.00	4.72	.72
	International project administration and finance	3.91	4.69	.77
Skills	English proficiency	3.87	4.60	.73
	Digital and data literacy	3.77	4.50	.73
	Mobility, event, and protocol management	3.36	4.26	.90
	Intercultural communication skills	4.01	4.70	.69
Self-Concept	Customer orientation	4.18	4.77	.59
	Global and sustainability mindset	4.29	4.89	.60
Traits	Change agility and adaptability	4.35	4.95	.60
	Attention to detail	4.46	4.95	.49
Motives	Continuous learning and innovation	4.36	4.94	.58
	Initiative and accountability	4.52	5.05	.54

The biggest gaps are found in operational competencies that directly support international activities. Knowledge of international procedures and institutional policies showed a gap of .72 (actual $M = 4.00$ vs. ideal $M = 4.72$). Knowledge of international project administration and finance has an even larger gap of .77 (actual $M = 3.91$ vs. ideal $M = 4.69$).

Skill-related competencies presented similar challenges. English proficiency showed a .73 gap (actual $M = 3.87$ vs. ideal $M = 4.60$). Digital and data literacy also showed a .73 gap (actual $M = 3.77$ vs. ideal $M = 4.50$). The largest skill gap appeared in mobility, event, and protocol management at .90 (actual $M = 3.36$ vs. ideal $M = 4.26$). Intercultural communication skills showed a gap of .69 (actual $M = 4.01$ vs. ideal $M = 4.70$).

The deeper Iceberg layers showed stronger performance. Customer orientation, which reflects self-concept, recorded a .59 gap (actual $M = 4.18$ vs. ideal $M = 4.77$). Global and sustainability mindset showed a .60 gap (actual $M = 4.29$ vs. ideal $M = 4.89$). Change agility and adaptability in the traits dimension had a gap of .60 (actual $M = 4.35$ vs. ideal $M = 4.95$). Attention to detail had the smallest gap among all competencies, at .49 (actual $M = 4.46$ vs. ideal $M = 4.95$). Motive-related competencies, such as continuous learning and innovation, showed a .58 gap (actual $M = 4.36$ vs. ideal $M = 4.94$), while initiative and accountability showed a .54 gap (actual $M = 4.52$ vs. ideal $M = 5.05$).

These results confirmed a consistent pattern: staff already possessed intrinsic readiness to engage in international work but required institutional support and skill enhancement to meet operational demands. Cluster analysis further clarified the readiness levels. Three clusters were identified: high, moderate, and low readiness. Most respondents fell into the moderate readiness category. A smaller group showed high readiness, often associated with prior exposure to international work or specific training. The smallest group shows low readiness, typically due to limited opportunity, minimal training, or a lack of involvement in international-facing tasks. These profiles imply different development needs. The high readiness group may benefit from advanced training and opportunities for greater responsibility. The moderate group requires structured and continuous development to build consistency. The low readiness group needs targeted support, preferably starting from foundational competencies.

Across all analyses, the visible layers of the iceberg model showed the most urgent need for improvement. Improving knowledge of international procedures, administrative systems, and English communication skills is essential in the short term. In terms of skills, mobility, event, and protocol management deserves the most attention, as it has the highest gap. At the same time, the already strong behavioral attributes provide a solid foundation for faster progress once operational gaps are addressed.

Inferential analysis (ANOVA) revealed no significant difference in the level of internationalization competency readiness across faculties; non-academic staff from all faculties demonstrated moderate readiness levels. However, significant differences emerged among generations (see Appendix 1). Post hoc testing using independent samples t-tests identified where these generational differences lay: (1) no significant difference was found between generation X and generation Y staff (see Appendix 2), but significant differences were observed between generation Y and generation Z (see Appendix 3), and between generation X and generation Z (see Appendix 4). Correlation analysis further indicated two points: (1) there was no correlation between employment status (PNS [civil service officials] or non-PNS) and internationalization readiness across faculties, and (2) there was a strong correlation between generation and internationalization readiness.

Table 6. Cluster Profiles of Internationalization Readiness

Cluster	Description	% of respondents
1	Moderate overall competency	40.71
2	High readiness group	30.09
3	Low readiness group	29.20

Table 7. Competency Gaps by Iceberg Category Using Averaged Actual and Ideal Scores

Iceberg model	Competency dimension	Actual M	Ideal M	Gap
Knowledge	International procedures and institutional policies	3.96	4.70	.92
	International project administration and finance			
Skills	English proficiency	3.75	4.52	.79
	Digital and data literacy			
	Mobility, event, and protocol management			
	Intercultural communication skills			
Self-Concept	Customer orientation	4.24	4.83	.57
	Global and sustainability mindset			
Traits	Change agility and adaptability	4.41	4.95	.51
	Attention to detail			
Motives	Continuous learning and innovation	4.44	5.00	.52
	Initiative and accountability			
	Overall	3.97	4.65	.68

To complement the quantitative results, qualitative interviews were used to validate and contextualize the identified competency gaps through triangulation. The interview results help clarify what was already visible in the survey data. Quantitatively, staff showed strong motivation, adaptability, and willingness to support international activities. At the same time, many still experienced difficulties in everyday operational tasks, especially when dealing with English communication, international procedures, digital systems, mobility arrangements, and cross-cultural interaction. The interview responses pointed in the same direction. According to managers, these difficulties are not caused by negative attitudes, but by limited operational skills and the lack of clear institutional support. This reinforces the interpretation that the gaps identified in the survey are structural in nature rather than personal.

The interviews also shed light on why these gaps have been difficult to close. Both staff and managers described HR practices that are still loosely connected to the internationalization agenda. Recruitment processes do not specifically select for global competencies, career paths related to international work are unclear, and existing training programs do not always match actual field needs. These observations are consistent with the survey results that show uneven skill development and different readiness levels across units. Limited budget commitment and infrequent exposure to international activities further slow competency growth, even though staff motivation remains relatively high. Taken together, the qualitative findings support the quantitative results and suggest that internationalization readiness depends less on individual willingness and more on institutional systems that can turn motivation into consistent performance.

Discussion

Based on the survey at Universitas Padjadjaran, the challenge of internationalization is not about willingness. Staff already show strong motivation, positive attitudes, and service-oriented behavior in supporting international programs. They try to deliver what is needed, even when they are not fully equipped. Many of the tasks are done because they must be done, not because a system has prepared them to handle international procedures. The capability gap appears in areas that require clear structure: English communication, digital tools in international administration, and applying procedures related to mobility and partnership. These demands grow faster than institutional support. Staff effort does not automatically translate into readiness when the system itself is not ready.

The iceberg model helps explain why this pattern appears. Universitas Padjadjaran possesses a foundation that

is difficult to build: motivation, initiative, adaptability, and strong work ethic. What still needs to be strengthened are the visible competencies that support daily operations. When English communication still relies on self-confidence rather than mastery, when data management depends on personal familiarity with applications, and when protocol handling is learned from colleagues instead of training, performance depends more on the person than the institution. It becomes clear that Universitas Padjadjaran is dealing with a structural gap. The need is not to change how people feel about their work but to enable them through better preparation and clearer systems.

Similar situations have been found in other universities. Ramírez and Tejada (2022) observed that such gaps appear when HR systems are not explicitly linked to international goals. In developing countries, studies have shown that motivation is generally not the problem, while operational capacity often lags behind. This aligns with the behavioral strengths found in this research. Theories of cultural intelligence and intrinsic motivation (Earley & Ang, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000) also support the idea that staff already have the personal capacity to work in cross-cultural settings. There is potential waiting to be activated. What they need is an organizational structure that makes international work a clear mandate rather than a voluntary effort.

In practice, some staff learn procedures by doing and they help each other to solve unfamiliar cases. Trial and error becomes the default learning method. That approach shows autonomy and initiative but also highlights the missing institutional scaffolding that should make learning faster, more consistent, and more standardized. Without that, international tasks remain ad hoc. They are done when needed, and only by the people who already know how. This creates dependency on individuals instead of systems, and if those individuals rotate or resign, competence rotates with them.

Unit managers also shared similar concerns. They recognize the importance of internationalization, but they do not yet see it embedded in HR evaluation or career mobility. An employee who supports international activities may not receive any more recognition than someone who never handles them. International responsibilities are often treated as extra work rather than a role of strategic importance. This contrasts with universities where international support roles are treated as formal expertise. Without structural incentives, high-performing staff may feel that global-oriented work is not a pathway for professional growth.

The data show a clear contrast between what is strong and what is not. Behavioral readiness is already present: customer orientation, adaptability, accountability, and willingness to improve. These strengths provide a valuable starting point. However, the operational layer, which determines the quality and reliability of international services, still needs investment and direction. Strengthening cannot rely on general training alone. It requires complete alignment across the human capital lifecycle: from how people are recruited to how performance is measured and how careers are shaped (Wright & McMahan, 2011; Hitt et al., 2023). This is where transformation becomes structural, not incidental.

The inferential analysis showed a clear institutional pattern in how internationalization readiness is distributed among non-academic staff. No significant differences were found across faculties, which suggests that readiness is influenced more by university-level systems than by faculty-specific practices. Staff from different academic units share similar conditions and constraints, and all faculties remain at a moderate level of readiness. This indicated that internationalization capacity at Universitas Padjadjaran is shaped centrally rather than developed unevenly across units. From a managerial point of view, this finding implies that faculty-based initiatives alone are unlikely to produce meaningful change. A coordinated approach at the institutional level is therefore required.

A different pattern appeared when readiness is examined across generations. While generation X and generation Y showed similar levels of readiness, generation Z differed significantly from both groups. This suggested that internationalization readiness is partly influenced by generational experience. Younger staff tend to be more

familiar with digital tools and global communication, but they often lack procedural experience and confidence in formal institutional processes. Older staff, on the other hand, usually understand internal systems well, yet may find it more difficult to adjust to new international practices. These differences indicated that readiness is not uniform across age groups and develops through different pathways.

The correlation analysis strengthened this interpretation. Employment status—whether PNS (civil service officials) or non-PNS—showed no relationship with readiness. This indicates that formal position alone does not determine international capability. In contrast, generation showed a strong association with readiness levels. Taken together, these results suggest that exposure, learning history, and adaptability to changing work environments matter more than administrative status.

Overall, the statistical evidence supports the main argument of this study. Internationalization challenges at Universitas Padjadjaran are not caused by faculty differences nor employment categories. This instead reflects the need for development strategies that recognize generational variation are at the same time supported by institution-wide human capital systems.

This research responds to a gap in the literature. Many studies focus on the academic side of internationalization, especially lecturers and researchers. Yet internationalization does not become real in the classroom or laboratory alone. It becomes real when an international student arrives and needs help, when a partner university signs an agreement, when funds are processed for mobility, or when an event welcomes guests from abroad. Non-academic staff turn policy into experience. Their readiness is therefore a strategic indicator of how prepared the organization is to engage with the world.

Overall, these findings show that readiness is present in the people, and the missing readiness is in the structure. Internationalization will move faster if the institution decides to translate motivation into capability by building systems that support consistent performance. Individual readiness and organizational readiness can strengthen each other when the HR architecture is aligned with global objectives. The implications of this alignment provide the basis for the conclusion that follows, which offers practical directions to support Universitas Padjadjaran's international ambitions.

To begin strengthening this alignment, the priority lies in improving how the institution attracts and places individuals in roles connected to international responsibilities. The survey results showed that many staff are already enthusiastic about working with international partners. However, some practical capabilities are still not strong enough to support smooth operations. For that reason, the hiring process needs to clearly differentiate roles that handle global responsibilities, so applicants entering those positions already bring the basic competencies required. English and digital proficiency can be stated upfront as basic requirements, and simple screening methods can help identify applicants who are already comfortable with international tasks. Updating job descriptions will also help staff understand why the role matters for international goals. This approach follows the idea that recruitment is not merely about filling vacancies but also helping an institution move toward its long-term strategic goals (Wright & McMahan, 2011). Researchers also emphasize that internationalization will only advance when staff capabilities grow in the same direction as leadership priorities (Hoai et al., 2023).

Training is the next priority after people are in the role. Many staff already show confidence but struggle with practical demands such as communicating in English, navigating mobility procedures, or operating digital systems. A staged training plan can make learning more focused, while exposure-based methods like rotation or shadowing in international units can build practical experience. Monitoring skill growth through HR systems keeps development accountable. These approaches are supported by human capital theory (Becker, 1993) and by studies showing that administrative capability and cultural intelligence improve through structured and experiential learning (Melo et al.,

2021; Earley & Ang, 2003).

Performance evaluation also needs adjustment. Tasks related to international work are often handled as extra duties and are not fully recognized in appraisal discussions. When achievements in global engagement are rewarded, behavior becomes more consistent and not just dependent on personal initiative. Performance assessment could, therefore, include the quality of support given to international students or partners as part of the evaluation. When contributions to global tasks are recognized and rewarded, staff are more likely to maintain their motivation and initiative (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). This also aligns with research showing that performance systems must reflect an institution's strategic focus (Ramírez & Tejada, 2022).

Career development plays a role in retaining skilled and motivated staff. Some employees have already demonstrated strong ability to handle international tasks, yet they do not see a clear route to advance in that area, which may gradually weaken their commitment. Creating career tracks for internationally oriented positions, while linking competency development to promotion opportunities, can increase long-term commitment. Mobility assignments, including cross-unit projects, provide meaningful learning while strengthening institutional capability. These ideas align with research showing that global mindset evolves through career progression (Javidan & Walker, 2013) and that reward systems must support strategic goals (Brøgger et al., 2023).

Evidence from other contexts indicates that internationalization efforts tend to slow down when non-academic staff are not adequately prepared for operational demands (Oleksiyenko & Liu, 2022; Amzat et al., 2023). In Universitas Padjadjaran's case, the motivation already exists. What is missing is a structure that directs and supports staff in performing globally. By embedding international competency standards into recruitment, development, performance management, and career planning, internationalization shifts from a project-based agenda into a sustained institutional capability.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that non-academic staff at Universitas Padjadjaran already had a strong foundation in the deeper layers of the iceberg model. They demonstrated motivation, service orientation, adaptability, and initiative. These strengths indicate that the readiness challenges faced by the institution do not stem from attitudes or willingness.

The most critical gaps appeared in the knowledge and skills domains. English proficiency, digital literacy, familiarity with international procedures, protocol management, and intercultural communication still require major improvement. These gaps appear consistently across survey data, interview findings, and document analysis. This suggests that the institution's human capital system has not yet been fully aligned with internationalization objectives. Readiness requires not only intrinsic motivation, but also system support, structured competency standards, and integrated HR mechanisms.

This study provided valuable insight by placing non-academic staff at the center of internationalization operations. Previous research has often focused on academic actors while overlooking the role of administrative personnel. By combining the iceberg model with a strategic human capital perspective, this study explained how readiness is shaped at each level of competence. It also addresses a theoretical and empirical gap by offering a competency-based assessment suited to the context of Indonesian higher education. However, motivation and positive disposition alone are not enough; they must be supported by systems that enable consistent performance.

Based on the findings, the study recommends implementing a competency-based strategic human capital management framework. Recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and career development must be directly connected to internationalization needs. Improving English proficiency, digital capability, and procedural knowledge should be prioritized to enhance services for international stakeholders. Aligning competency expectations with

recognition and career opportunities will help ensure that high-readiness staff are fully utilized and retained.

These recommendations offer actionable steps for strengthening the human capital foundation needed to support global competitiveness. Future research could explore how leadership and organizational culture influence competency development. Studies in different institutional contexts could expand the applicability of the framework. Such extensions could refine theoretical models and support stronger strategic human capital initiatives in higher education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Readiness Level between Generations

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Between Groups	16.083	2	8.042	5.993	.003
Within Groups	147.599	110	1.342		
Total	163.682	112			

Note: Because the significance value (.003) < α (.05), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected meaning there is a difference in readiness levels between generations.

Appendix 2. No Difference in Readiness between Generation X and Generation Y

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means					95% confidence interval of the difference	
	F	p	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.991	.161	-.997	101	.321	-.287065095	-.2878126224	-.86	.28
Equal variances not assumed			-1.169	43.126	.249	-.287065095	-.782334086	-.78	.21

Note: In the homogeneity of variance test, the significance value (.161) > α (.05), so the variances (H_0) are assumed to be homogeneous. Therefore, the interpretation is based on the *equal variances assumed* row. The significance value in the "equal variances assumed" test is (.321) > α (.05), indicating no difference in readiness between Generation X and Generation Y.

Appendix 3. Difference in Readiness between Generation Y and Generation Z

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means					95% confidence interval of the difference	
	F	p	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.485	.125	-3.210	30	.003	-1.04234848	.3247170085	-1.71	-.38
Equal variances not assumed			-3.869	27.556	<.001	-1.04234848	.2694072584	-1.59	-.49

Note: The homogeneity test shows a significance value of (.125) > α (.05), so variances (H_0) are homogeneous. The significance value in the "equal variances assumed" test is (.003) < α (.05), indicating a difference in readiness between Generation Y and Generation Z.

Appendix 4. Difference in Readiness between Generation X and Generation Z

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means					95% confidence interval of the difference	
	F	p	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	5.127	.026	-3.298	89	.001	-1.32941358	.4030668848	-2.13	-.53
Equal variances not assumed			-5.881	22.468	<.001	-1.32941358	.2260558523	-1.80	-.86

Note: The homogeneity test shows a significance value of (.026) < α (.05), so variances (H_0) are not homogeneous. Therefore, the "equal variances not assumed" result is used. The significance value (<.001) < α (.05), indicating a difference in readiness between Generation X and Generation Z.

Appendix 5. No Correlation between Employment Status and Average Competency Level

		M	Civil servant/non-civil servant status
Average	Pearson correlation	1	.116
	p (2-tailed)		.222
	N	113	113
Civil Servant/Non-Civil Servant Status	Pearson correlation	.116	1
	p (2-tailed)	.222	-
	N	113	113

Note: The correlation value is 0.116, which is very small and not significant. The significance value (.222) > α (.05), meaning there is no correlation between employment status and average competency level.

Appendix 6. Strong Relationship between Generation and Internationalization Readiness

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Between Groups	16.083	2	8.042	5.993	.003
Within Groups	147.599	110	1.342		
Total	163.682	112			

Note: $\eta^2 = \frac{16.083}{163.682} = 0.1$ The results indicate a large effect (between generations and international readiness competency) meaning there is a strong relationship between generation and internationalization readiness. This is supported by the significant ANOVA results showing differences in mean readiness across generations. Eta-squared (η^2) was used because generation has more than two categories. The interpretation is as follows: 0.01 = small effect; 0.06 = medium effect; 0.14 = large effect.