

The role of public relations education and students' self-efficacy on career aspiration

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ABSTRACT

Background: Studies on career readiness and aspiration are crucial for educational establishments to assess how well the education of students influences their self-efficacy. Progress in the Public Relations (PR) profession relies on the successful education of PR academic institutions. **Purpose:** This study examined the PR students' self-efficacy by identifying two variables: confidence in their Public relations abilities and skills and confidence in their knowledge of PR. The study then looks at how these predictors affect their career readiness. **Methods:** Using hierarchical regression, this study looks at the effect of two vital predictors of confidence in PR abilities, skills and knowledge on PR on career readiness. Aside from the two predictors, the demographical characteristics and additional predictors of whether the students have experienced job internships and are currently active in the student association were also examined. The data was analysed using a sample of 139 students from Universitas Padjadjaran. **Results:** From the regression models, students' self-efficacy significantly influences career readiness, while having internship experience and being active in student associations are also positively associated with career readiness, although not statistically significant. Demographic characteristics do not have a statistically significant influence on career readiness. **Conclusion:** This study highlights the non-existent impact of demographic factors on students' self-efficacy and career readiness while providing underpinnings for future research on self-efficacy. **Implication:** Although the results may not necessarily reflect similar circumstances in similar settings for other establishments, for the specific context of Universitas Padjadjaran, this study provides data-driven evidence on the role of PR education in the students' self-efficacy and how they perceive their career aspirations in the future.

Keywords: PR education; self-efficacy; career aspiration; career readiness; hierarchical regression

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INTRODUCTION

At their core, educational institutions aim to produce well-rounded individuals ready to contribute meaningfully to society. A key objective is to equip graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their chosen careers. This involves imparting theoretical knowledge and fostering practical skills and critical thinking abilities.

Academic institutions must keep pace with industry trends and changing job needs to ensure that graduates are relevant to the job market. Matching programs of study to workforce needs means academic institutions are producing highly sought-after graduates. Partnerships with industry partners, internships, and real-world projects that challenge students are ways to align education with practice.

Although conventional metrics such as academic success (GPA) and graduation rates are essential, these measurements may only partially reflect a student's deference to the workforce. An alternative variable in determining a student's prospects for academic and future professional success is self-efficacy or belief in one's ability to succeed. Building self-efficacy encourages students to face future challenges and persevere, ultimately setting them up for success.

However, research has overshadowed

the importance of self-efficacy in education with other, more easily quantifiable metrics previously mentioned (GPA, graduation rates, length of study, etc.). This is unfortunate because a better understanding of how to support students in developing self-efficacy will help create more effective teaching and learning practices. Research on self-efficacy leads institutions to new understandings of how to equip students better to lead in the 21st-century workforce, and the research should be prioritised as a new aspect of the student experience.

Self-efficacy is an idea developed by Albert Bandura about a person's convictions in their ability to meet challenges and achieve specific goals. Bandura (1995) describes "self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that influence events that affect their lives. This mindset is essential in addressing goals, tasks, and obstacles. A higher sense of self-efficacy can give a person more motivation, resilience, and persistence to stick with a task when it becomes challenging, which can also affect the ability to obtain the desired goals. They found that self-efficacy has played a determining role in performance and follow-up decisions in many contexts, ranging from education to professional development, establishing self-efficacy as one of the essential constructs to justify human behaviour and performance.

Career decision-making self-efficacy is essential in directing individuals along their career journey. Bandura's self-efficacy theory states that an individual's expectation about their capabilities considerably impacts their actions and choices, especially in a work-related context. Numerous studies reflect the importance of the relationship between career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) and career outcomes. For example, Bi (2023) highlights that career decision-making self-efficacy is vital for postgraduate nursing students in China because this mediates the association between professional self-concept and career decision-making difficulties. Higher self-efficacy is believed to help reduce decision-making challenges, easing the career transition process.

For instance, a study suggests that satisfaction of critical psychological needs directly predicts career adaptability while indirectly influencing it due to CDMSE. This is consistent with social cognitive career theory, which states that cognitive constructs like self-efficacy considerably influence behaviours related to the domain of a career (Xu, 2023). In another study, career self-efficacy affects career-related variables such as satisfaction and organisational commitment (Sinring & Fadhilah, 2023). This means that higher self-efficacy is positively related to career success.

One of the pioneering studies by Ballout (2009) found a strong positive correlation between self-efficacy and career success, such as salary and job satisfaction. In educational contexts, a study reveals that actions related to one's career can reinforce CDMSE, ultimately contributing to confident career choices (Kim et al., 2014). A later survey of African-American high school students demonstrated a positive relationship between CDMSE and vocational identity and CDMSE and career exploration activities (Gushue et al., 2006). All serve to reinforce the necessity of developing self-efficacy to improve career paths.

The literature suggests that self-efficacy affects decision-making and promotes active career exploration. In addition, CDMSE is positively correlated to self-efficacy and teacher and parental support. For example, Gushue and Whitson (2006) showed a positive correlation between parental and teacher encouragement and CDMSE, suggesting supportive environments and gender self-efficacy in job decision-making. Another study found similar results, claiming that parents' involvement could help build high school students' self-efficacy (Ramadhani & Lestari, 2021).

Best education assessment practices mitigate the influence of education on the formation of the body of knowledge in Public Relations (PR) studies. Education assessment

ensures that curricula are relevant and practical in PR education and establishes alignment between PR education and industry. Educational program assessments are relevant in PR today because they evaluate students' learning outcomes and skills and prepare them for the labour market.

A different article mentions the need for service-learning assessments in PR education and how such evaluations may determine the extent of required learning gains and lend credence to the effectiveness of PR curricula in delivering these gains (Farmer et al., 2016). This is a win for current students and extends to alums, creating a virtuous cycle about what is woven into the curriculum.

PR education is assessed on a curricular basis and validated through professional accreditation of educational programs. A study by Demidov et al. (Demidov et al., 2020) acknowledges that public certification is a mechanism for accountability to ensure that the products the educational marketplace supplies match the evolving needs of the labour market and society. This is based on findings from a different study, which states that PR curricula must standardise their content to improve the quality of education and professional readiness (Briones & Toth, 2013). Setting clear benchmarks for evaluation enables integrating educational programs within the industry's

measured needs, leading to an actionable plan that benefits students and schools.

This study focuses on public relations education through students' lenses and how it influences student's self-efficacy. The goal of this research is to add detail to the understanding of how educational programs are perceived from the student perspective and if they are adequately preparing students for the needs of the industry. Public relations is a vibrant, fast-moving industry that requires theory, practice, creativity, and self-assurance. As a result, educators and institutions can use this information to iterate on their curricula to better equip their graduates with the tools to handle real challenges in the future.

The study focuses significantly on students' self-efficacy and preparedness for a career in public relations. Self-efficacy, or an individual's belief that they can achieve success in given contexts, is a factor that is vitally important in shaping career aspirations and outcomes. The study aims to understand the extent to which students feel competent and prepared to deal with the multiparadigmatic concept of the communication landscape by the way they develop an understanding of their competencies. Such assessment will help identify the psychological aspects of readiness for careers in public relations, and it will also help identify the problematic areas that need to be focused

on for better preparedness for a public relations career. Many studies show a unique relationship between self-efficacy and school readiness. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to get involved in their education and seek other opportunities to develop their skills, such as internships or networking. This study will add to the body of knowledge by underscoring the need to instil self-efficacy in public relations curricula. Learning how to improve this area of students' experience allows educators space to implement strategies to reinforce confidence and ensure that graduates will not just leave with knowledge but the conviction that they can perform effectively in their careers.

A study by Choirudin et al. (2022) found a positive and significant correlation between self-efficacy and career readiness among low-income Muslim students, implying that those with higher self-efficacy are better prepared for careers. The results suggest gauging self-efficacy can inform students' preparedness to transition into their careers. Additionally, Andini and Lukito (2022) stated that emotional intelligence and social support, which affect career decision self-efficacy, can strengthen career readiness. These results indicate that including information on emotional intelligence and social support systems may improve self-efficacy when considering career readiness domains. This is especially important for

communication students who often utilise interpersonal skills and networking to advance their careers.

Self-efficacy significantly mediates career maturity and increases career readiness (Solikhah, 2014). In other words, a complete evaluation of self-efficacy must also consider students' career maturity since these webs are interconnected. An analogous study supports this finding, noting a relationship between increased levels of career self-efficacy to job search behaviours and more positive employment outcomes, supporting the idea that self-efficacy should be measured as an indicator of career readiness (Ramasamy & Nithyanandan, 2016). Another study joins this thought and shares that students with high self-efficacy became more engaged in their studies and career exploration, which is an essential subject for communications students because they have to learn theory and application (Alfaiz et al., 2021). Self-efficacy and career readiness can also be assessed using specific instruments to measure self-efficacy in career contexts, such as the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (Lee, 2022).

In particular, Nik Yusoff (2024) outlines how a career readiness module can improve self-efficacy. This reinforces the potential of structured interventions to boost students' self-efficacy significantly. Therefore, educational

programs should focus more on career readiness.

An individual's career aspirations are heavily shaped by their readiness to enter the workforce and whether they are sufficiently prepared, confident, and driven to pursue the careers that interest them. Research suggests that career self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and aspirations are KEY in shaping students' career paths. For instance, Creed et al. (2013) examined the role of career self-efficacy and outcome expectations as mediators of the relationship between goal orientation and career exploration, indicating the relevance of these psychological factors to the development of career aspirations. Furthermore, one study validated that career interventions significantly improve career decision self-efficacy. Such interventions facilitate the alignment of students' aspirations to their educational achievements, further displaying the significance of career readiness when acquiring their intended careers (Berger et al., 2019).

Finally, self-efficacy is vital for communication and public relations students. These factors interact, and communication students who heavily depend on interpersonal skills and networking as a significant portion of their practice will increasingly benefit from interventions that improve their self-efficacy across the relevant traits for their future career trajectories in communication. Regarding

communication students, self-report scales, emotional intelligence and social support assessments, and structured career readiness programs can measure self-efficacy for career readiness. These strategies will give a broader picture of how well-prepared students are for the workforce.

A large body of research has shown the importance of self-efficacy in an individual's career development. Self-efficacy, or confidence in one's capacity to perform a specific job or activity, has been demonstrated to play a role in many career-related end products, such as job performance, career selection, and general levels of pleasure in their work.

We still need to discover the importance of self-efficacy in the decision-making process and its influence on the career aspirations of public relations students. For this reason, we were interested in investigating these issues, particularly at Universitas Padjadjaran. This study aims to fill this gap and examine the association between self-efficacy and career aspirations among university PR students.

The current study investigates the relationship between self-efficacy and career readiness to provide evidence of what impacts PR students' aspirations. Its results will provide the basis for future studies to examine further how self-efficacy determines future career endeavours. Moreover, this study will provide

new insights into the growing literature on how PR education shapes students' career trajectories from their point of view.

This research will complement a previous study by the primary author, which analysed the quality of Universitas Padjadjaran PR programme graduates in the industry through a correlation analysis between current career linkage and their income by examining their past GPA, previous study duration, and duration before getting a job in the field of PR (Lukman et al., 2023). This study will provide a better depiction by providing more data-driven evidence about students' current self-efficacy in the Universitas Padjadjaran PR program and how much PR education impacts students' career readiness.

RESEARCH METHOD

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the self-efficacy of public relations (PR) students at Universitas Padjadjaran. In particular, it aimed to measure students' perceived proficiency in PR competencies, skills, and knowledge. The study also examined the association of self-efficacy with these students' career aspirations.

The researchers took a more straightforward approach to measuring self-efficacy; rather than using more established psychometrics, which

typically consists of a long set of questionnaires, this study simplified the measurements into several questions that ask about student's confidence in their ability to tackle PR challenges with their current PR ability and also how they perceived their level of skills and knowledge in the field of PR. The potential for participant fatigue and low response rates warranted a non-complex psychological scale. The researchers designed a more streamlined assessment tool to maximise participation and collect reliable data.

Simplifying the measure of self-efficacy offers several advantages to this study. It can reduce the cognitive burden on participants, making the survey process more efficient and less time-consuming. Moreover, a less complex instrument may increase the likelihood of accurate and honest responses, as participants are less likely to be overwhelmed or confused by the questions. By prioritising simplicity, the researchers aimed to gather meaningful insights into the self-efficacy of PR students.

Out of simplicity considerations, self-efficacy, as the predictor, will be measured by two items: how confident the students are with their PR ability in the workforce and how confident they are with their PR skills and knowledge using a 5-scale Likert scale. PR career aspirations are measured by their confidence in taking a PR entry-level job and a definite question about the specific PR profession they prefer in the

future. The dependent variable will be students' career readiness to work as entry-level PR practitioners. Other predictor variables included in the study are two binary variables of whether the students have experienced work internships and are active in their student association body (*himpunan mahasiswa*). Demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, and class (start of study year), will also be examined.

An important assumption for this study concerns the role of public relations education received by students at Universitas Padjadjaran. As all the samples are current active students registered in the university's administrative database, this study assumes that all students have received PR education, albeit with varying degrees of understanding.

This study administered an online questionnaire with no personal identifier to all of the PR students of Universitas Padjadjaran using various communication channels, such as WhatsApp groups and direct classroom announcements. Based on actual administrative records, in September 2024, 458 active students were registered, ranging from the class of 2019 to 2024. From 458 students, 139 survey forms were collected, yielding an approximately 30.3% response rate from the students.

Since the sample size was predetermined rather than established by a conventional sampling framework, the study employed a

post hoc power analysis to justify the number of samples using the G*Power application (Faul et al., 2009; Newsom, 2021). The sample size plays an essential role, as it highly influences both the hypothesis and study design, while an inappropriate sample size may result in insufficient research outcomes (Cohen, 1988; Serdar et al., 2021).

In this study, data were analysed using hierarchical regression. It enables researchers to explore the relationship between multiple independent variables and a dependent variable while holding the effects of other variables constant. This is helpful in social studies and psychology, where variables operate in complex interactions with many facets. For instance, hierarchical regression was used to assess the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between communication skills and infectious disease prevention practices among daycare educators, showcasing the ability of self-efficacy to impact health-related behaviours (Shin & You, 2021). Another study employed hierarchical regression to examine the mediating effect of career decision self-efficacy on the relationship between parental support and career indecision, indicating the method's applicability in career-related domains (Mao et al., 2016).

In the first regression phase, the dependent variable of career readiness would be regressed

on two independent self-efficacy variables. In the second step of the regression, the model includes two new variables of interest in the regression model: internship experience and student body association member. In the final regression step, the demographic variables of age, sex, and year the study begins (class) will be introduced into the model. The hierarchical regression will allow for a detailed interpretation of the impact of the independent variables and how the additional variables added in later models in each step of the sequencing impact the dependent variable of career readiness.

A descriptive category was created from a categorical question to identify the specific career paths of PR students. The hierarchical regression was performed using STATA18 statistical software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of this study is descriptive statistics analysis (Tables 1, 2). Table 1 shows a breakdown of the demographic data of the 139 samples collected and examples of the gender distribution of participants. Among them, 28 were identified as male (20.1% of the sample), and a considerably more significant number, 105 participants, expressed their identity as female (75.5% of the sample). In addition, responses for gender identity came from 6 participants (4.3 %)

who preferred not to disclose. This distribution follows the gender ratio of Public Relations (PR) students of Universitas Padjadjaran, where the number of females is generally more than males.

Another breakdown shows that most students fall in the late teenage category, with around 31.6 per cent of students being 18 years old and around 28 per cent being 19. This trend also reflects a relatively low number of students in their final years of study, indicating that many students entering the PR program are likely in the infancy of the whole higher education system, conveying a youthful demographic enthusiastic about becoming involved in this dynamics. After this, the age distribution is further that 21.5% of students are 20 years old and 12% of students are 21 years old. Then, there are a few 17-year-old students and some over 22 years old, hence, a range of ages. These participants ranged significantly in age, which could give rise to varying educational backgrounds and life experiences that added depth and context to the data collected. This analysis and observation of gender identification, or rather a lack of studies, is an interesting finding.

Interestingly, some students did not align themselves with gender categories defined by the mainstream. If a person is genuinely a typical male or typical female, then the rise in numbers accordingly raises issues for societal

Table 1 Frequency Table of Demographic Characteristics and Specific PR Career Aspirations

Variable	F	%
Sex		
Male	28	20.14
Female	105	75.54
Prefer not to answer	6	4.32
Age		
17	5	3.6
18	44	31.65
19	39	28.06
20	30	21.58
21	17	12.23
22	3	2.16
23	1	0.72
Class		
2019	1	0.72
2020	8	5.76
2021	12	8.63
2022	31	22.3
2023	37	26.62
2024	50	35.97
Internship Experience		
No	111	79.86
Yes	28	20.14
Active in Student Association		
No	68	48.92
Yes	71	51.08
Ideal PR Career		
PR Corporate	57	41.01
Agency/Consultant	16	11.51
Government	14	10.07
Media/Event Planner	21	15.11
Content Creator	20	14.39
Not Decided	11	7.91
Total	139	100

Source: Research data, 2024

norms. Many studies, particularly in Indonesia, do not capture this subtlety, instead relying on binary gender classifications. Such a gap in research opens the door for more expansive

future studies to address the nuances of gender identification of students in higher education spaces. The demographic profile of PR students contextualises the study's findings and suggests future research. The unwillingness of some students who struggled to identify within the gender binary raised enough eyebrows; however, this new approach should take into consideration the changing face of gender that society wields.

Further research could focus on these interactions and how social, cultural, and educational factors shape gender identity and expression among Indonesian students. Students from the younger cohort mainly participated in this study, with the class of 2024 having the highest proportion (36%), followed by the class of 2023 at 26.6% and the class of 2022 at 22.3%. This is quite natural, as students from the younger cohort tend to be more present and active in various academic engagements.

Twenty per cent of students have completed internships at various organisations, and more than half (51%) of those surveyed in this study reported being actively involved in the student body association or *himpunan mahasiswa*. This indicates that many students engage in student associations in addition to their daily academic activities.

The final section of Table 1 analyses the students' preferred career paths. Most students

(41%) envisioned themselves as PR practitioners in corporate settings. This was followed by those interested in working as event or media planners (15%), content creators for social media or various online platforms (14%), PR consultants or agency professionals (11%), and positions in the government (10%). Additionally, 8% of the students still need to decide about their PR career path. The current curricula of PR studies at Universitas Padjadjaran emphasise PR skills and knowledge in the corporation settings, particularly in classroom illustrations and case analysis; most coursework subjects discuss corporate settings. This may explain the large proportion of corporate PR selected as the preferred career path among students.

Summary statistics regarding the independent variable of the public relations (PR) students' self-efficacy are presented in Table 2. This self-efficacy is measured by examining students' conviction of their ability to meet challenges typical in PR work. We also investigate their perceived ability to develop PR skills and knowledge; the latter is of utmost importance since it is a key issue for success in PR. These numbers are important indicators of how ready students feel as they enter the intricacies of their selected profession.

It is essential to understand these variables because self-efficacy can significantly influence students' motivation and persistence since PR

is a competitive landscape and an ability to overcome obstacles. The findings on students' career readiness aside from self-efficacy are detailed in Table 2. Career preparedness refers to the skills and character traits that enable students to move from an educational institution into the workplace successfully. It suggests that they are ready to tackle real-life issues and require the PR arm of their business. By establishing a connection between self-efficacy and career readiness, we would like to show how students' confidence in their abilities indicates their preparedness to enter successful public relations careers.

Before data collection, self-efficacy and career readiness items were rigorously tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha statistics. This technique is a standard method to assess the internal consistency of a set of scale or test items. Cronbach's Alpha exceeded 0.8 for each variable for the current study. This threshold symbolises a significant degree of dependability, thus validating that the items intended to evaluate self-efficacy and vocation readiness are steady and solid. The degree to which it is psychological is critical to the validity of our results, as the measure captures what we intend it to capture.

We performed a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test for all the measuring variables before constructing summary

Table 2 Summary Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

Observed Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Confident in PR Ability	139	3.6	0.76	2	5
Skills and Knowledge in PR	139	3.8	0.77	2	5
Career Readiness	139	4.1	0.81	2	5

Source: Research data, 2024

statistics of the variables. This test plays a vital role in identifying the progression of the non-linear data sequence under consideration. All variables in our study showed normality based on p-values above the 0.05 cut-off point. Given the importance of self-efficacy for career readiness, this is particularly relevant in the public relations field. Generally, students with high self-efficacy have a greater tendency to pursue opportunities, engage in proactive solutions, and endure various obstacles. These characteristics elevate their educational experience and improve their professional lives after graduation. Thus, it is essential to focus on and enhance self-efficacy in PR education to eventually contribute towards developing competent professionals equipped to respond to industry demands.

Table 2 provides fascinating insights into the relationship between PR students' self-efficacy and career readiness. Using valid, reliable measures and verifying normality strengthens us to make conclusions that can translate into academic practices and industry expectations. This is especially true for students

who mustered the tools and skills to boost their confidence in the curriculum usually integrated into public relations courses. Not only does this help the students, but it also helps the industry as a whole, with a well-versed workforce that will be able to deal with the changes and advancements in public relations in modern society.

The findings, which are summarised in the table, suggest that respondents are generally moderately confident in their PR abilities (Mean = 3.6). This implies a general confidence level with room for improvement. On average, respondents feel they have a moderate to high level of skills and knowledge (Mean = 3.8). This indicates a positive perception of their capabilities, but there might be areas where they feel less equipped. On average, respondents feel ready for their careers as a PR practitioner (Mean = 4.1). Their self-assessment suggests a positive outlook on their future career prospects.

If the findings in the data yield a higher standard deviation (SD), it indicates more significant response variability. All variables have a relatively low SD, suggesting that most

respondents had similar opinions in the survey study. The data suggests a generally positive outlook among respondents regarding their self-efficacy on PR abilities, skills, knowledge, and career readiness.

After reviewing all variables' descriptive and summary statistics, the study will proceed with the hierarchical regression analysis. In the first step, the dependent variable, career readiness, will be modelled using two predictors related to self-efficacy: confidence in PR ability and skills and knowledge in PR. In the second step of the regression, two additional variables—internship experience and active participation in the student body association—will be included. Finally, in the last step, the model will incorporate demographic characteristics such as age, sex, and the year the study began (class). The results are displayed in Table 3, which presents the results of a hierarchical regression analysis, where variables are added in blocks to assess their incremental contribution to predicting career readiness.

The first model regresses career readiness as the criterion variable and two self-efficacy variables as the predictors. Both self-efficacy predictors are statistically significant $F(2,136) = 30.54, p < 0.001$, with the model R-square value at 0.3. This indicates that the regression model of career readiness as the criterion explains a 31% variance in the student's confidence in their

PR ability, skills, and knowledge, indicating that other factors not included in the model may also play a role.

In the second model, we add two additional predictors, two binary variables that signify whether the student participating in the study is active in the student body association (*himpunan mahasiswa*) and whether they have experienced any form of PR internship in any work establishment. The R-square value increased by .01 per cent, indicating a better fit with the newer model than the first model with the statistics of $F(4,134) = 15.76, p < 0.001$. However, although the additional binary variables were associated with career readiness, they were not statistically significant in the new model. We can interpret the effect of internship experience and active participation in the student body association as inconsistent. The moderation effect of these two variables slightly alters the impact of Skills and Knowledge in PR as the coefficient increased, with both variables still statistically significant at a $p\text{-value} < 0.05$.

In the third model, we added three demographic characteristics to observe the moderating effect of sex, age, and the start of the study year (class). Sex is a categorical variable, with males as the reference category, while age and class are numerical variables. The model was also statistically significant $F(8, 130) = 8.36, p < 0.001$, with the R-square increased by

Table 3 Hierarchical regression table with Career readiness as criterion variable

Predictor	Coef.	SE	95% CI		p	R-sq
			LL	UL		
Model 1						0.31
Confident in PR Ability	0.25	0.11	0.03	0.47	0.021	
Skills and Knowledge in PR	0.37	0.1	0.16	0.59	0.001	
Constant		0.3	1.18	2.4	<0.001	
Model 2 (adding internship experience and active in student association)						0.32
Confident in PR Ability	0.23	0.11	0.00	0.45	0.046	
Skills and Knowledge in PR	0.38	0.11	0.16	0.59	0.001	
Active in student association	0.12	0.12	-0.12	0.36	0.337	
Internship experience	0.14	0.16	-0.18	0.45	0.393	
Constant	1.82	0.32	1.19	2.46	<0.001	
Model 3 (age and class year treated as interval)						0.34
Confident in PR Ability	0.21	0.11	-0.02	0.43	0.07	
Skills and Knowledge in PR	0.39	0.11	0.17	0.61	<0.001	
Active in student association	0.16	0.13	-0.10	0.43	0.22	
Internship experience	0.27	0.18	-0.09	0.63	0.15	
Age	0.04	0.09	-0.14	0.21	0.68	
Sex (ref: male)						
Female	0.04	0.15	-0.26	0.33	0.79	
Prefer not to answer	-0.37	0.32	-1.00	0.27	0.26	
Class	0.11	0.09	-0.07	0.30	0.22	
Constant	-229.45	189.67	-604.70	145.80	0.23	
Model 4 (age and class converted into categorical)						0.36
Confident in PR Ability	0.22	0.11	-0.01	0.45	0.05	
Skills and Knowledge in PR	0.38	0.11	0.16	0.60	0.00	
Active in student association	0.12	0.16	-0.19	0.44	0.44	
Internship experience	0.30	0.18	-0.06	0.67	0.10	
Age (ref: under 20)						
Above 20	-0.03	0.18	-0.3	0.33	0.87	
Sex (ref: male)						
Female	0.07	0.15	-0.23	0.37	0.64	
Prefer not to answer	-0.36	0.32	-1.01	0.27	0.26	
Class (ref: 2020 and older)						
2021	0.65	0.31	0.03	1.27	0.04	
2022	0.58	0.29	0.00	1.16	0.05	
2023	0.55	0.33	-0.09	1.21	0.09	
2024	0.62	0.34	-0.06	1.31	0.07	
Constant	1.15	0.48	0.19	2.12	0.01	

Source: Researcher data, 2024

Note. Total N = 139. Coef. = regression coefficients. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. p = probability

0.2, again indicating a better model fit. Both self-efficacy variables of confidence in PR ability and PR skills and knowledge were still statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, with slightly different coefficients yet similar numbers. Comparing the second and third models with the first model, we can conclude that the effect of the two self-efficacy variables on the variance of career readiness is not influenced by adding the binary variables of internship experience and being active in the student association. Furthermore, the demographic characteristics of age, sex, and class also have a moderation effect. In the next hierarchical step, we decide to recode the numerical variables of age and class as categorical variables and attempt the last regression model.

Examining the fourth regression model that observes career readiness as the criterion variable and after converting age and class as categorical variables, the model was statistically significant $F(11, 127) = 6.43$, $p < 0.001$, with the model R-square value at 0.36, 0.06 increase from the original model, indicating a better fit. The effect of both self-efficacy variables was statistically significant in the fourth model and consistent in all models. Being active in the student association was not a statistically significant predictor, although having internship experience was statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Still examining the fourth model, adding three categorical predictors of age, sex, and class improves the model fit. However, the interpretation may not be straightforward as age and sex were not statistically significant to predict the variance of career readiness. In contrast, the same variables of the class were statistically substantial, warranting further exploration of how to treat time-variance variables such as class. The interpretation of the current model suggests that although class may be a factor, the effect on career readiness may be more nuanced and unverifiable statistically.

To check whether multicollinearity exists among the variables in the model, post-test statistics of variance inflation (VIF) were conducted in each regression model. We found no evidence of multicollinearity for all variables in all four regression models in variables whose VIF values were less than 5. There was also no evidence of heteroskedastic problems with the Breusch-Pagan test value, which was not statistically significant. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test also showed that the residuals are normally distributed, meaning the final model (fourth model) with the best fit can be accepted to explain career readiness with the predictors.

Both primary predictors, self-efficacy, confidence in PR Ability, and Skills and Knowledge in PR, consistently have significant positive coefficients across all models. This

indicates that higher confidence and skills are associated with higher career readiness. These findings were consistent with those of Xu (2023), Kim et al. (2014), and Sinring & Fadhillah (2023), who all suggest a similar notion of the role of self-efficacy in career readiness and aspiration.

Participation in student associations and internships is widely recognised as crucial for preparing students for their careers. These activities are platforms for developing essential skills, building professional networks, and gaining practical knowledge relevant to various fields. Engaging in student organisations enhances leadership abilities as students take on roles that require collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving. However, the benefits of these involvements can be nuanced. The impact of participation often depends on the specific nature of the activities chosen, the level of individual engagement, and the dynamics of each organisation. Not all experiences yield the same level of growth or learning, underscoring the importance of intentional choice and commitment. This would explain why experience in student association was not a statistically significant predictor for career readiness.

Internships are similarly vital for career preparation, as they allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings

and establish a clearer understanding of their chosen fields. The quality of internships can vary greatly, influencing the overall benefits that students gain from the experience. Factors such as assigned responsibilities, the mentorship received, and the organisation's culture all play significant roles in determining the value of an internship. Students pursuing internships closely aligned with their career aspirations will likely experience substantial benefits, including skill development, enhanced self-efficacy, and valuable professional connections that can lead to future job opportunities. However, the results show that experiencing an internship was not statistically significant as a predictor.

Demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and class year, are additional variables that can influence career readiness in complex ways. While these factors may shape individual experiences, they do not straightforwardly dictate a student's preparedness for the workforce. For instance, while older students might possess more maturity and prior work experience, this does not always translate into higher career readiness. Younger students may have equal or even superior readiness levels if they have seized relevant opportunities, demonstrating that individual effort and engagement often play a more decisive role than demographic factors alone.

Additionally, gender can impact the

resources and opportunities available to students but does not directly correlate with career readiness. Hypothetically, gender disparities regarding access to internships and leadership positions within student organisations affect students' preparedness (Ramadhani & Puji Lestari, 2021). However, these demographic aspects often interact with personal motivation and individual circumstances, indicating that they operate in collaboration, which this study does not capture.

The influence of class year also deserves attention, as upper-level students may have had more time to cultivate experiences; still, they may need more preparation than first-year students actively engaging in career-related activities. Past studies have shown that more experienced students have improved self-efficacy compared to younger students (Sholikah et al., 2021), which was not proven in this study.

This study also complements Rahmat's past research (2016), which examines the perceptions of users and employers of public relations graduates in the workforce. Rahmat's study students perceived PR abilities, while the current study provided perceived self-efficacy of PR abilities, skills, and knowledge. A critical takeaway from examining these factors is that self-efficacy significantly influences career readiness. Students who possess confidence

in their skills and abilities are often better equipped to navigate the job market challenges. While engagement in internships and student organisations contributes to this self-efficacy, the impact can be more intricate. It is essential to recognise that personal determination, resilience, and adaptability can significantly enhance readiness, often overshadowing the more superficial benefits offered by specific experiences. Thus, cultivating self-efficacy should be a priority for educators and students alike.

The interplay between student involvement, internships, demographic factors, and self-efficacy presents a complex landscape for understanding career readiness. While student associations and internships undoubtedly provide valuable experience and connections, their effectiveness is determined by engagement quality and alignment with career goals. Furthermore, demographic factors add complexity to the conversation, often acting as background influences rather than direct determinants of preparedness. Fostering self-efficacy remains a pivotal focus, empowering students to take control of their career paths and maximise their readiness for the professional world. Through a holistic approach that considers all these factors, students can better position themselves for success in their future careers.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an evidence-based analysis of the role of PR education at Universitas Padjadjaran in current students' perceptions. Generally speaking, students have moderately high confidence in their PR abilities to tackle current challenges within the industry. Students also feel that they have moderately high skills and knowledge required for the work of a PR. Based on this study, students consider themselves ready to face the challenges of working as PRs in the future. On a somewhat positive note, these findings provide evidence of the role of PR education on student's self-efficacy and career aspirations. However, we must note the study design's potential sampling bias and flaws before generalising the results in different contexts.

Self-efficacy variables that measure the confidence level in PR abilities and confidence in skills and knowledge significantly influence career readiness aspirations, with PR skills and abilities contributing more significantly to the former. All models showed associations of demographic characteristics on career readiness, although the interpretation could be more straightforward, with various variables not statistically significant. For the binary variable of whether students have experienced professional internships and active participation

in the student body association (*himpunan mahasiswa*), the statistical model also showed an association between the two variables on career readiness. However, the effect for both variables was not statistically significant. These findings warrant further investigations with alternative treatments on the variable with evidence of associations but not statistically significant tests. A larger number of samples may also be able to provide richer data, with comparative data from another similar education establishment.

This initial study has made significant strides in understanding the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their career aspirations, particularly within academic conditions at the faculty of communications at Universitas Padjadjaran. The findings indicate a positive correlation between students' beliefs in their capabilities and their motivation to pursue PR career paths. These insights are promising for educators and administrators looking to empower students, highlighting the importance of fostering a strong sense of self-efficacy. Recognising that students who believe in their potential are more likely to set ambitious goals can influence how programs are structured to support student development. Despite these positive findings, there remains a pressing need for future studies to refine the methodologies used to gauge both self-efficacy

and career readiness. Greater reliance on validated psychological metrics will enhance the credibility of the measurements and provide a clearer picture of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing students. Drawing from established psychological theories and tools can enable researchers to capture the complexity of self-efficacy more accurately. This methodological enhancement will benefit future research endeavours and yield more actionable insights for educators looking to support student career development effectively.

Moreover, understanding the relationship between self-efficacy, career aspirations, and career readiness necessitates a deeper exploration of the study's context. While the findings in this study are valuable, they could be enriched by examining institutional variables such as the culture of the university, the academic rigour of the programs offered, and the characteristics of the local job market. These elements can significantly shape students' experiences, influencing their engagement with the curriculum, internship opportunities, and readiness to transition into the workforce. Future research should incorporate these contextual aspects to provide a fuller picture of how various factors influence students' career trajectories.

While this study serves as a solid foundation for understanding self-efficacy

about career aspirations, it also opens the door to further exploration. Future research should delve into the nuances of contextual influences, emphasising the need for diverse perspectives to truly capture the dynamics at play. Researchers can develop more by broadening the scope of inquiry to include cultural, academic, and market-related factors.

Continuous study on similar topics is valuable in providing academic members with insights into assessing an educational establishment's educational performance and determining intervention policies when they are not deemed to align with the educational process.

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