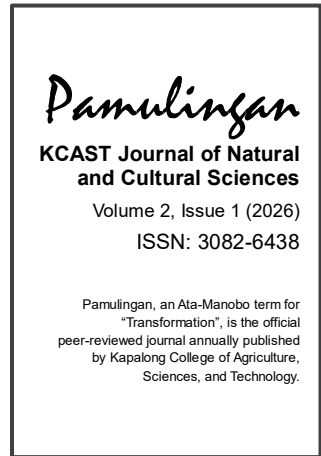


THE INFLUENCE OF SOFT SKILLS AND INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE ON WORK READINESS AMONG MARKETING GRADUATES

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SDGs: **Goal 4 (Quality Education); Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of soft skills and internship experience on work readiness among marketing graduates, highlighting the importance of preparing students to meet the demands of the professional workforce. The research aimed to determine the levels of soft skills, internship experience, and work readiness, and to assess the relationship and influence of these factors on graduates' readiness for the workplace. A quantitative descriptive correlational research design was employed to address the research objectives. Using stratified random sampling, a total of 239 Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Major in Marketing Management graduates from a local college, spanning the school years 2021 to 2025, were surveyed. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between soft skills and work readiness, as well as between internship experience and work readiness. Regression analysis further revealed that both soft skills and internship experience significantly influenced work readiness, with internship experience having a more substantial impact. Overall, the study confirms soft skills and internships improve work readiness. Future research should explore digital skills. Schools must strengthen internships, while employers provide supportive learning environments.

Keywords: ***Internship Experience; Marketing Graduates; Soft Skills; Work Readiness; Philippines***

INTRODUCTION

Work readiness refers to graduates' preparedness to meet workplace demands; however, several studies have identified persistent gaps between academic preparation and practical competence. Magallanes (2022) found that many graduates lacked practical communication and interpersonal skills due to low engagement in classroom and extracurricular activities, leading to difficulties in collaboration and idea expression in the workplace.

Similarly, Saeed et al. (2024) reported that graduates in Sindh, Pakistan, exhibited low confidence and problem-solving abilities as a result of an education system that emphasized theoretical learning over experiential and critical thinking approaches. In the Philippines, Labitad (2025) observed that limited exposure to real-world work environments and insufficient internship opportunities weakened graduates' discipline, adaptability, and overall work readiness, despite strong academic performance.

This study addresses the growing gap between academic preparation and industry expectations in the field of marketing, where employers increasingly demand strong soft skills, critical thinking, adaptability, and relevant internship experience. Its urgency lies in the need to improve curricula that better prepare marketing graduates for dynamic work environments. Socially, the study is significant as it can guide higher education institutions in designing programs that enhance graduates' employability and overall work readiness.

The study fills a clear research gap by examining the combined influence of soft skills and internship experience on the work readiness of marketing graduates an area not fully explored in previous studies. While Magallanes (2022) emphasized student engagement, Saeed et al. (2024) explored broad determinants of work readiness, and Labitad (2025) focused on academic and on-the-job training performance, none of these studies specifically investigated how soft skills and internship experience interact to influence the work readiness of marketing graduates. Most previous studies treated these variables separately or examined different predictors of employability. By focusing on marketing graduates at Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology (KCAST), the study provides localized and discipline specific evidence that contributes to a deeper understanding of graduate employability and workforce preparedness. The findings are expected to support curriculum enhancement, guide institutional planning, and contribute to the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting the development of competent and work-ready graduates.

The study was conducted to investigate the relationship between soft skills and internship experience on work readiness among marketing graduates. Specifically, it addressed the following:

1. To determine the level of soft skills among marketing graduates in terms of:
 - 1.1. teamwork;
 - 1.2. project management;
 - 1.3. communication skills;
 - 1.4. interpersonal skills; and
 - 1.5. problem solving.

2. To determine the level of internship experience among marketing graduates in terms of:
 - 2.1. positive internship experience;
 - 2.2. positive work environment;
 - 2.3. improved job prospects;
 - 2.4. new skills;
 - 2.5. comfort with work environment; and
 - 2.6. communication skills.
3. To determine the level of work readiness among marketing graduates in terms of:
 - 3.1. social intelligence;
 - 3.2. organizational acumen;
 - 3.3. personal characteristics; and
 - 3.4. work competence.
4. To determine the significant relationship between:
 - 4.1. soft skills on work readiness; and
 - 4.2. internship experience on work readiness.
5. To determine which variable, namely soft skills and internship experience, can significantly influence work readiness among marketing graduates.

This study is anchored on three key theories that explain how soft skills and internship experiences contribute to the work readiness of marketing graduates. First, the Human Capital Theory (Strober, 1990) posits that investments in education, skills development, and practical experience enhance an individual's productivity, employability, and economic value. Within this framework, soft skills and internship experiences are considered essential forms of human capital that prepare graduates for the demands of the workforce. Second, the Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) emphasizes that learning is most effective when individuals acquire knowledge through direct experience, reflection, and application. Internships provide students with opportunities to bridge classroom learning and workplace practice, enabling them to develop critical soft skills, gain industry exposure, and strengthen their professional competence.

Also, the Career Readiness Theory (Parsons, 1909) highlights the importance of aligning an individual's skills, interests, and abilities with the requirements of a chosen career. In this context, soft skills enhance graduates' personal and professional competencies, while internship experiences offer valuable insights into workplace expectations and industry standards, helping them make informed career decisions. Collectively, these theories provide a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how the development of soft skills and participation in internship programs enhance the work readiness of marketing graduates and facilitate their successful transition into the professional workforce.

This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), by examining how soft skills and internship experiences enhance the work readiness of marketing graduates. Grounded in Human Capital, Experiential Learning, and Career Readiness theories, the study emphasizes the development of key competencies and real-world exposure that support employability. Its findings can inform curriculum enhancement, strengthen internship programs,

and improve school industry collaboration, thereby promoting youth employment and economic inclusion in support of SDG 4 and SDG 8.

METHODOLOGY

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study focuses solely on marketing graduates of Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology (KCAST), which may limit the generalizability of the results to graduates from other academic programs or institutions. Second, the study relies on self-reported data gathered through survey questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias, social desirability bias, or inaccuracies in participants' perceptions. Third, the study examines only soft skills and internship experience as predictors of work-readiness and does not account for other factors that may influence employment preparedness, such as academic achievement, technical skills, socioeconomic background, or labor market conditions. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to the work-readiness of marketing graduates and serves as a basis for future research in this area.

The research design used was a quantitative research design, where numerical data is gathered and measured by objective processes using methodologies such as surveys to determine trends, test hypothesis, and project conclusions (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). Using validated survey questionnaires and statistical analysis, the study assessed the extent to which soft skills and internship experience contribute to graduates' work-readiness and provided empirical evidence to address the research objectives.

The research also used a descriptive correlational method to define the features of the respondents and test the associations between the variables without control (Seeram, 2019). By using this approach, the researchers could establish the connection between stronger soft skills and more meaningful internship experiences and the levels of work-readiness, which can be used in academic and career development programs.

This study utilized a predictive correlation design to examine the relationships between soft skills, internship experience, and the work-readiness of marketing graduates. Using correlation and regression techniques without manipulating variables, the approach focused on identifying which predictors most strongly explain graduates' readiness for employment rather than establishing causation (Efe, 2024). This method is appropriate for determining the key competencies and experiential factors that significantly influence work-readiness among marketing graduates.

The research was carried out at the KCAST which is a community college that focuses on transformative education, leadership, and development of practical skills. KCAST offers an appropriate setting for this study because its marketing program integrates both academic instruction and internship experiences, enabling students to develop the knowledge, technical competencies, and soft skills required in the workplace. Furthermore, as the institution produces marketing graduates who have completed internship training, it provides a relevant population for examining how soft skills and internship experiences contribute to work-readiness. The

findings of this study may also provide valuable insights for the institution in enhancing its curriculum and internship programs to better prepare future graduates for professional employment.

The sample was comprised of 596 BSBA Marketing Management graduates 2022-2025. The inclusion criteria are (1) graduates of BSBA-MM from KCAST, (2) between school years 2021 to 2025, and (3) who voluntarily agree to participate in the survey. The exclusion criteria include graduates of the BSBA major in Financial Management (BSBA-FM), graduates from other schools, and those who completed their studies in the 2020 school year or earlier. This selection process ensures that only qualified respondents with relevant and recent academic and internship experiences are included in the study.

The sample of 239 respondents (40.16) was chosen based on the formula by Slovin and stratified random sampling to make it representable. The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure that all relevant subgroups within the target population were adequately represented. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the population of marketing graduates may vary in characteristics such as graduation year, employment status, or other demographic factors that could influence work-readiness. By dividing the population into homogeneous strata and randomly selecting respondents from each group, the study minimized sampling bias and increased the representativeness of the sample. Consequently, stratified random sampling enhanced the reliability and accuracy of the findings regarding the influence of soft skills and internship experience on the work-readiness of marketing graduates.

Adapted questionnaires were used to fill in the data: Soft Skills: 25 points that comprised teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills (Musa et al., 2012). In addition to that, Internship Experience: 30 questions evaluating work exposure, skill building, and job preparedness (Gupta et al., 2010). Finally, Work-Ready: 20 questions assessing social intelligence, organizational acumen, personal characteristics, and working competence (Abuhussain et al., 2021). Every instrument had a 5-point Likert scale with descriptive equivalents ranging between the terms: Very Low to Very High. Prior to administration, the adapted instruments were subjected to expert validation to ensure their relevance, clarity, and appropriateness to the context of the study.

Crafting of the Questionnaires. The data collection process of this study begins with the careful crafting of the survey questionnaire. The researchers adapted existing and validated items from previous studies, specifically the 25-item Soft Skills Questionnaire from Musa et al. (2012), the 30-item Internship Experience Questionnaire from Gupta et al. (2010), and the 20-item Work-Readiness Questionnaire from Abuhussain et al. (2021). These instruments were revised to fit the local context of the study and aligned with the research objectives.

Approval and Validation of the Questionnaires. Following the crafting of the instrument, the questionnaire was submitted to the research adviser for initial review. After incorporating feedback, the revised version was presented to a panel of evaluators for technical review and further validation. Once finalized, the questionnaire is submitted to the KCAST Research Office for formal approval and endorsement. This step ensures that the instrument is academically sound, ethically compliant, and aligned with institutional standards and policies.

Only after securing full approval, the researchers proceed to the next stage of the data collection process.

Consent from Respondents. Before distribution, the researchers seek informed consent from all respondents. A consent form was attached to each questionnaire, clearly stating the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of responses. Respondents assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence—only those who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to the terms included in the final survey sample.

Distribution and Collection of the Survey Questionnaires. The approved and consented questionnaires were distributed using digital platforms to reach the respondents. The researchers ensure that all respondents complete the survey fully and accurately by monitoring the digital submissions. Clear instructions were provided, and follow-ups were made to ensure a high response rate. After the survey period, all completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness before proceeding to data processing.

Tabulation of Results. Once data collection was completed, the researchers tabulated the survey responses and organized them according to each variable and its corresponding indicators. The compiled data was submitted to the KCAST statistician for analysis. The statistician computed the level of soft skills, internship experience, and work-readiness using appropriate statistical techniques. Additionally, significant relationships among the variables and the substantial influence of soft skills and internship experience on work readiness were identified. The statistical findings are crucial in interpreting the results and drawing evidence-based conclusions.

The mean was used to analyze the data in order to establish the levels of soft skills, internship experience, and work-readiness. Pearson-r correlation was used to evaluate the relationship between variables and multiple regression was used to establish the non-negligible role of soft skills and internship in work-readiness.

The research conformed to the best ethical practices, such as informed consent, minimizing risk, anonymity, confidentiality, and conflict of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Nijhawan et al., 2013; Wiles et al., 2008; MacKenzie & Cronstein, 2006). The integrity and credibility of the research process ensured that the participants agreed to participate willingly and on a voluntary basis, data were handled correctly, and the final results of the study were obtained only through an objective analysis.

RESULTS

The results of the data on the influence of soft skills and internship experience on work-readiness among marketing graduates are presented in the section below, along with the significant relationships and influences of all variables.

Summary on the Level of Soft Skills

The results of the study regarding the summary on the level of soft skills, as shown in Table 1, were measured through a survey questionnaire. The responses of the respondents on each indicator were presented and analyzed below. The overall mean score for the soft skills was 4.44, described as very high. The measure indicates soft skills among marketing graduates was always observed.

Table 1
Summary on The Level of Soft Skills

Indicators	Mean	Description
Teamwork	4.53	Very High
Project management	4.41	Very High
Communication skills	4.43	Very High
Interpersonal skills	4.41	Very High
Problem solving	4.40	Very High
Overall	4.44	Very High

The indicator with the highest mean is teamwork, achieved the mean score of 4.53, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates soft skills among marketing graduates in terms of teamwork was always observed. Conversely, the indicator with the lowest mean is problem solving, had a mean score of 4.40, categorized as very high. The measure indicates soft skills among marketing graduates in terms of problem solving was always observed.

Additionally, the indicator with second to the highest mean is communication skills, achieved the mean score of 4.43, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates soft skills among marketing graduates in terms of communication skills was always observed. Moreover, the indicator with third to the highest mean are project management and interpersonal skills, both had a mean score of 4.41, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates soft skills among marketing graduates in terms of project management and interpersonal skills are always observed.

Summary on the Level of Internship Experience

The results of the study regarding the summary on the level of internship experience, as shown in Table 2, were measured through a survey questionnaire. The responses of the respondents on each indicator were presented and analyzed below.

The overall mean score for the internship experience was 4.46, described as very high. The measure indicates internship experience among marketing graduates was always observed. The indicator with the highest mean is communication skills, achieved the mean score of 4.53, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates internship

experience among marketing graduates in terms of communication skills was always observed. Conversely, the indicator with the lowest mean is comfort with work environment, had a mean score of 4.41, categorized as very high. The measure indicates internship experience among marketing graduates in terms of comfort with work environment was always observed.

Table 2
Summary on The Level of Internship Experience

Indicators	Mean	Description
Positive Internship Experience	4.48	Very High
Positive Work Environment	4.46	Very High
Improved Job Prospects	4.47	Very High
New Skills	4.43	Very High
Comfort With Work Environment	4.41	Very High
Communication Skills	4.53	Very High
Overall	4.46	Very High

Additionally, the indicator with second to the highest mean is positive internship experience, achieve a mean score of 4.48, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates internship experience among marketing graduates in terms of positive internship experience was always observed. Furthermore, the indicator with third to the highest mean is improved job prospects, achieve a mean score of 4.47, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates internship experience among marketing graduates in terms of improved job prospects was always observed.

Also, the indicator with fourth to the highest mean is positive work environment, had a mean score of 4.46, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates internship experience in terms of positive work environment was always observed. Moreover, the indicator with the fifth to the highest mean is new skills, had a mean score of 4.43, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates internship experience in terms of new skills was always observed.

Summary on the Level of Work-Readiness

The results of the study regarding the summary on the level of work-readiness, as shown in Table 3, were measured through a survey questionnaire. The responses of the respondents on each indicator were presented and analyzed below. The overall mean score for the work-readiness was 4.44, described as very high. The measure indicates work-readiness among marketing graduates was always observed.

The indicator with the highest mean is personal characteristics, achieved the mean score of 4.48, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates work-readiness among marketing graduates in terms of personal characteristics was always observed. Meanwhile, the indicator with the lowest mean is work competence, which had a mean score of

4.36, categorized as very high. The measure indicates that work-readiness among marketing graduates in terms of work competence was always observed.

Table 3
Summary on The Level of Work-Readiness

Indicators	Mean	Description
Social Intelligence	4.46	Very High
Organizational Acumen	4.45	Very High
Personal Characteristics	4.48	Very High
Work Competence	4.36	Very High
Overall	4.44	Very High

among marketing graduates in terms of personal characteristics was always observed. Meanwhile, the indicator with the lowest mean is work competence, which had a mean score of 4.36, categorized as very high. The measure indicates that work-readiness among marketing graduates in terms of work competence was always observed.

Additionally, the indicator with second to the highest mean is social intelligence, achieve a mean score of 4.46, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates work-readiness among marketing graduates in terms of social intelligence was always observed. Moreover, the indicator with third to the highest mean is organizational acumen, had a mean score of 4.45, with a descriptive equivalent of very high. The measure indicates work-readiness among marketing graduates in terms of organizational acumen was always observed.

Significant Relationship between Soft Skills and Work-Readiness

Presented in Table 4, the study's results regarding the significant relationship between soft skills and work readiness were measured through a survey questionnaire. The responses of the respondents on each variable were presented and analyzed below.

Table 4
Significant Relationship Between Soft Skills and Work-Readiness

Variables Correlated	Mean	R	p-value	Decision
Soft Skills	4.44	0.552	<.001	H_o Rejected
Work-Readiness	4.44			

The study revealed a strong positive correlation between soft skills and work readiness among marketing graduates. The mean scores for both soft skills and work-readiness were identical at 4.44, indicating that, on average, students rated themselves highly in both areas. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.552$) suggested a moderate to strong positive correlation, meaning that students with higher soft skills tended to exhibit higher levels of work-

readiness. This finding emphasized the importance of interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills in preparing students for the professional environment. The statistically significant p-value ($<.001$) further confirmed that the observed relationship was not due to chance, reinforcing the reliability of the results

Based on the results, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that there is no significant relationship between soft skills and work-readiness, was rejected. This indicated that soft skills were a meaningful predictor of work-readiness among the participants. The study highlighted that developing soft skills, such as teamwork, adaptability, and effective communication, could enhance the students' ability to meet workplace demands successfully. These findings suggest that educational programs in business administration should emphasize the development of soft skills as a crucial component in preparing students for future careers.

Significant Relationship between Internship Experience and Work-Readiness

Presented in Table 5, the study's results regarding the significant relationship between internship experience and work readiness were measured through a survey questionnaire. The responses of the respondents on each variable were presented and analyzed below.

The study revealed a strong positive correlation between internship experience and work readiness among marketing graduates. The mean score for internship experience was 4.46, slightly higher than the mean score for work-readiness, which was 4.44, indicating that students generally reported high engagement in internships and perceived themselves as prepared for the workplace. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.673$) indicated a strong positive correlation, suggesting that students who had more substantial or meaningful internship experiences tended to exhibit higher levels of work-readiness. The p-value of less than .001 demonstrated that this relationship was statistically significant, confirming that the findings were unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 5
Significant Relationship Between Internship Experience and Work-Readiness

Variables Correlated	Mean	r	p-value	Decision
Internship Experience	4.46	0.673	$<.001$	H_0 Rejected
Work-Readiness	4.44			

As a result, the null hypothesis (H_0), which posited that there is no significant relationship between internship experience and work-readiness, was rejected. This indicated that internship experience played a crucial role in enhancing students' readiness for professional responsibilities. The findings highlighted that hands-on exposure to real-world workplace environments, practical tasks, and professional interactions contributed to the development of essential skills, confidence, and adaptability among students. The study emphasized the value of internship programs as an integral component of business administration education, effectively preparing students for their future careers.

Significant Influence of Soft Skills and Internship Experience towards Work-Readiness

Presented in Table 6, the study's results regarding the significant influence of soft skills and internship experience on work-readiness were measured through a survey questionnaire. The responses of the respondents on each variable were presented and analyzed below.

Table 6
Significant Influence of Soft Skills and Internship Experience Towards Work-Readiness

Predictors	Work-Readiness			
	B	T	P	Decision
Soft Skills	0.335	5.145	<.001	H_o Rejected
Internship Experience	0.609	9.894	<.001	H_o Rejected
R = 0.713		$R^2 = 0.508$		

The study demonstrated that both soft skills and internship experience have a significant influence on work readiness among marketing graduates. The regression analysis showed that soft skills had a beta coefficient (β) of 0.335 with a t-value of 5.145 and a p-value of less than .001, indicating that it was a significant predictor of work-readiness. Similarly, internship experience had a higher beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.609$) with a t-value of 9.894 and a p-value of less than .001, suggesting an even more substantial influence on students' preparedness for the workplace. These results suggest that while both factors contributed positively to work-readiness, internship experience had a more substantial impact than soft skills.

The overall model had an R-value of 0.713 and an R^2 of 0.508, indicating that approximately 50.8% of the variance in work-readiness could be collectively explained by the combination of soft skills and internship experience. This finding highlighted that more than half of the students' work-readiness was accounted for by these two predictors. At the same time, the remaining variance could be attributed to other factors not included in the study. The significance of both predictors emphasized the importance of combining skill development with practical experience in preparing marketing graduates for professional roles. Consequently, the study supported the integration of soft skills training and structured internship programs as key strategies to enhance students' work-readiness.

DISCUSSION

Level of Soft Skills

The study reveals that the level of soft skills among marketing graduates is very high, with strong competencies in teamwork, project management, communication skills, interpersonal skills and problem-solving which enhance their work-readiness and workplace performance. These findings supported by Bunyamin et al. (2022), who emphasized that such

skills improve productivity and collaboration, and Jardim et al. (2022), who highlighted that group work strengthens communication, adaptability, and teamwork in real-world settings.

The study found that teamwork is the highest-rated soft skill among marketing graduates, reflecting their strong ability to collaborate, communicate, and contribute effectively to group settings, which enhances their work-readiness. This is supported by Zapata et al. (2022), who emphasized that teamwork improves problem-solving and productivity, and Tayco et al. (2022), who highlighted that cooperation, communication, and shared responsibility lead to better outcomes and accountability in professional environments.

Additionally, the study shows that problem-solving was the lowest among soft skills indicators, is still rated very high among marketing graduates, reflecting their strong critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and ability to implement effective solutions. This is supported by Descartin et al. (2023), who emphasized that problem-solving enables graduates to adapt and make informed decisions in dynamic business environments, and Cantus et al. (2023), who highlighted that evaluating solutions and integrating diverse insights enhances decision quality and fosters collaboration, confirming that marketing programs effectively develop essential analytical and professional competencies.

Meanwhile the marketing graduates possess very high in project management skills, demonstrating strong planning, organization, and execution in group projects, reflecting their readiness for professional responsibilities. This is supported by Gruber et al. (2022), who emphasized that practical project management enhances teamwork, accountability, and professional outcomes, and Hwang (2022), who highlighted that project-based academic activities improve planning, organization, and collaboration, fostering confidence and competence in managing tasks effectively.

The study also shows that marketing graduates possess very high in communication skills, demonstrating strong oral and written proficiency essential for professional settings. This is supported by Ngo and Thuy (2024), who emphasized that habitual academic communication enhances clarity and professionalism, and Casali et al. (2024), who highlighted that mastering formal email formats and styles improves confidence and effectiveness in professional written communication.

The study additionally reveals that marketing graduates possess very high in interpersonal skills, demonstrating strong ability to build relationships, understand social cues, and interact effectively in professional and social settings. This is supported by Lamberti et al. (2023), who emphasized that such skills foster collaboration and inclusivity, and Bernardo et al. (2023), who highlighted that adapting communication style to context enhances respectful and effective interactions across diverse environments.

Level of Internship Experience

The level of internship experience among marketing graduates was likewise found to be very high, reflecting meaningful engagement in practical workplace activities. Internships enhanced students' communication skills, job prospects, and acquisition of new competencies. These findings are supported by Reyes (2023) and Lobo (2022), who emphasize that internships bridge theory and practice and increase employability.

The study revealed that communication skills are the highest-rated internship experience indicator among marketing graduates, reflecting their ability to convey information clearly, collaborate, and build professional relationships. This is supported by Elsisura et al. (2022), who emphasized that internships develop communication for collaboration, conflict resolution, and team contribution, and Hingpit (2024), who highlighted that strong communication during internships fosters leadership, teamwork, and professional competence.

Meanwhile the study shows that comfort with the work environment is the lowest-rated, though still very high, internship indicator among marketing graduates, suggesting a slight need to enhance adaptability and confidence. This is supported by Guiamalon (2022), who emphasized that familiarity with the work environment maximizes learning and performance, and Comia et al. (2023), who highlighted that consistent exposure to workplace routines and professional etiquette fosters confidence, belonging, and readiness for employment.

Additionally, the study finds that marketing graduates report very high in positive internship experiences, indicating meaningful engagement and professional growth. This is supported by Pascua et al. (2022), who emphasized that significant tasks enhance learning, confidence, and professional attitude, and Malbuyo et al. (2024), who highlighted that task alignment with skills and academics increases motivation, performance, and ownership of learning.

The study also shows that marketing graduates rate their internship positive work environment as very high, perceiving it as supportive, inclusive, and conducive to learning. This is supported by Guiamalon (2022), who emphasized that welcoming and guided settings enhance confidence, motivation, and skill development, and Solis et al. (2024), who highlighted that respect and recognition from colleagues foster engagement, personal growth, and professional development.

Furthermore, the study finds that marketing graduates rate their internship experience in improving job prospects as very high, reflecting enhanced employability through practical skills and professional exposure. This is supported by Lobo (2023), who emphasized that internships boost employment opportunities by demonstrating professional competence, and who highlighted that internship experience can improve starting salaries and reduce employer training needs, providing graduates a professional and financial advantage.

Moreover, the study reveals that marketing graduates rate the acquisition of new skills during internships as very high, reflecting enhanced professional development and readiness for future careers. This is supported by Valderama (2023), who emphasized that internships foster personal growth, networking, and professional communication, and Magnaye (2022), who highlighted that internships enable students to gain technical and non-technical skills, adaptability, and confidence, preparing them for future work roles.

Level of Work-Readiness

The level of work-readiness among marketing graduates was found to be very high, supported by indicators such as personal characteristics, social intelligence, organizational acumen, and work competence that enable effective performance in professional settings. This is supported by Sidiq et al. (2022), who emphasized that work-readiness reflects preparedness

to meet workplace demands and navigate social dynamics, and Fauzan et al. (2023), who highlighted that combining social intelligence, organizational acumen, and work-related skills enhances graduates' transition to the workforce and long-term career success.

The study revealed that personal characteristics are the highest-rated work-readiness indicator among marketing graduates, reflecting responsibility, adaptability, self-motivation, and professionalism. This is supported by Sartika and Nengsi (2022), who emphasized that strong personal traits enhance employability, resilience, and workplace relationships, and Saeed et al. (2024), who highlighted that remaining calm under pressure improves problem-solving, professional performance, and preparedness for real-world work environments.

Meanwhile the study finds that work competence, while the lowest-rated work-readiness indicator, is still very high among marketing graduates, indicating solid job-related skills with room for further technical and practical development. This is supported by Inderanata and Sukardi (2023), who emphasized that task proficiency and job-specific knowledge are crucial for performance and career success, and Labitad (2025), who highlighted that motivated and responsible graduates develop reliability and quality outcomes through active classroom and internship experiences, enhancing readiness for professional roles.

Additionally, the study finds that social intelligence is rated very high among marketing graduates, reflecting their ability to understand, manage, and interact effectively with others in professional settings. This is supported by Orr et al. (2023), who emphasized that group projects and school activities build teamwork, trust, and communication skills, and Nugroho et al. (2024), who highlighted that clear articulation, active listening, and constructive feedback enhance confidence and collaborative competence in the workplace.

Furthermore, the study reveals that organizational acumen is very high among marketing graduates, reflecting their ability to understand workplace dynamics, align with company goals, and contribute effectively. This is supported by Letigio and Balijon (2022), who emphasized that proactive engagement in assignments and group activities develops structured workplace readiness, and Lucero (2024), who highlighted that effective time management and task prioritization foster productivity, balance, and professional success.

Significant Relationship between Soft Skills and Internship Experience on Work-Readiness

The study reveals that soft skills and internship experience significantly and positively influence work-readiness among marketing graduates. Developing interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving abilities alongside hands-on internship experiences prepares students to meet workplace demands and adapt effectively, highlighting the complementary role of both in business administration education.

The study supported by Human Capital Theory (Strober, 1990), showing that developing soft skills such as teamwork, adaptability, and communication enhances employability and work-readiness. It also aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), as internship experiences allow students to apply theoretical knowledge, engage in problem-solving, and gain professional insights, confirming that experiential learning strengthens competencies and prepares graduates for workplace challenges.

Integrating Parsons' Career Readiness Theory (Parsons, 1909), the study highlights that soft skills and internship experiences together develop attributes essential for career decision-making and employability. Combining personal competencies with practical experience enhances graduates' preparedness and adaptability, confirming that the joint development of soft skills and internships significantly improves work-readiness and complements the frameworks of human capital and experiential learning.

Significant Influence of Soft Skills and Internship Experience on Work-Readiness

The study revealed that soft skills and internship experience significantly impact work-readiness among marketing graduates, with internship experience having a stronger effect. Developing interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills alongside practical hands-on exposure better prepares students for effective performance in professional environments.

The study is grounded in the Human Capital Theory (Strober, 1990), confirming that soft skills serve as valuable personal assets that enhance productivity, employability, and work-readiness, validating the importance of competency development in human capital formation. Findings on internship experience align with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984), showing that hands-on engagement allows students to apply theory, develop practical skills, and improve problem-solving, demonstrating that experiential learning effectively prepares graduates for real-world workplace challenges.

Viewed through Parsons' Career Readiness Theory (Parsons, 1909), the study shows that soft skills and internship experience together develop attributes vital for career success, including adaptability, confidence, and professional judgment. By combining interpersonal competencies with practical exposure, graduates are better equipped to navigate the workplace, make informed career decisions, and perform effectively, confirming that integrating skill development with structured internships enhances work-readiness and complements human capital and experiential learning frameworks.

Conclusion

The study concludes that marketing graduates demonstrate a very high level of soft skills, including teamwork, project management, communication, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving. These competencies are consistently evident in their ability to collaborate effectively, communicate clearly, manage tasks efficiently, and address workplace challenges strategically. The findings indicate that marketing programs successfully develop essential soft skills that enhance graduates' professional competence and preparedness for workplace demands.

Similarly, the level of internship experience and work-readiness among marketing graduates is found to be very high. Internship programs provide meaningful exposure to real-world work environments, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge, acquire new skills, and improve job prospects. Graduates exhibit strong social intelligence, organizational acumen, personal characteristics, and work competence, suggesting they are well-equipped to adapt to organizational settings and perform effectively in professional roles.

Furthermore, the study reveals a significant positive relationship and influence between soft skills, internship experience, and work-readiness, with internship experience showing a stronger impact. These findings support Human Capital Theory, Experiential Learning Theory, and Career Readiness Theory, emphasizing that the integration of soft skills development and hands-on internship experiences is crucial in enhancing employability. Overall, structured internship programs and targeted skill-building initiatives play a vital role in preparing marketing graduates for successful entry into the workforce.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the work-readiness of marketing graduates by strengthening their soft skills and internship experiences. Academic institutions, particularly KCAST, may implement targeted programs such as critical thinking and problem-solving training, mentorship initiatives during internships, decision-making simulations, and communication-focused activities. These interventions aim to improve students' analytical abilities, adaptability, confidence, and professional communication through experiential and reflective learning.

In addition, institutions may adopt innovative and inclusive teaching strategies that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. Initiatives such as internship simulation offices, supervisor–intern partnership programs, professional identity workshops, and competence-based assessments can help students gain confidence and strengthen their marketing competencies. Providing equal access to skill-specific training for all students ensures consistent development and better preparation for real workplace environments.

Overall, the study suggests that the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may support initiatives that help students connect theoretical knowledge with real workplace challenges. In particular, key CMOs governing internship programs and curriculum design could be revisited to encourage programs that emphasize case studies, industry scenarios, and diverse internship tasks, which may enhance practical learning and skill development. Also, KCAST may consider strategies that encourage students to expand their skill sets more comprehensively during internships. Offering a wider variety of tasks, aligned with CMO guidelines, may further enhance students' practical learning experiences. Moreover, marketing graduates are encouraged to reinforce their knowledge through continuous engagement with professional scenarios, actively applying theoretical principles in real-world contexts. Lastly, future researchers may investigate additional factors contributing to work readiness. This could include exploring soft skills development in relation to internships, contextualizing indicators based on experiential learning, and evaluating innovative methods to build problem-solving abilities, practical skills, and confidence. Longitudinal studies could also assess how sustained internship programs impact career success, providing evidence to inform future CMO revisions and curriculum enhancements.

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