

# The Influence of Knowledge Application on the Employability of Indonesian University Students with Internship Experience

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**Abstract:** Bachelor's degree unemployment in Indonesia has increased steadily since 2022 despite the growing number of graduates entering the labor market. Knowledge management literature suggests that acquiring knowledge does not necessarily translate into the ability to apply it, whereas employers value knowledge application in workplace settings. This study tests that idea by looking at whether knowledge application predicts employability among 210 university students in Bandung, Indonesia, all of whom had completed an internship or a teaching practicum (PPL/P3K). Employability was measured across five dimensions: subject mastery, generic skills, career identity, personal flexibility, and career self-efficacy. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire, using purposive sampling, and analyzed with simple linear regression in SPSS. Both knowledge application and employability came out high overall, though career identity lagged behind the other four dimensions. The regression confirmed a positive, significant relationship ( $b = 0.527$ ,  $t = 11.198$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with knowledge application explaining 37.6% of the variance in employability ( $R^2 = 0.376$ ); the rest is presumably down to factors this study did not measure. These findings extend knowledge management theory by showing that the application dimension, not knowledge acquisition alone, is what carries over into labor-market readiness, a distinction current employability models rarely make explicit. For universities and internship providers, the practical implication is direct: structuring internships and teaching placements around real opportunities to apply coursework, rather than treating them as a formality, is likely to do more for graduate employability than adding further content to the curriculum.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bachelor's degree unemployment in Indonesia has climbed every year since 2022, reaching just over one million people by February 2025, the highest level in four years (Badan Pusat Statistik, as cited in GoodStats, 2025). A separate analysis from the University of Indonesia's economic research institute found that roughly 45,000 bachelor's graduates and 6,000 postgraduate degree holders had stopped looking for work altogether by late 2025, describing the pattern as structural rather than a temporary dip (as cited in Detik, 2026). Some analysts push back on reading these numbers in isolation, since university graduates still make up a smaller share of total joblessness than secondary and vocational school leavers (as cited in BSI News, 2026). That is a fair point, but it does not change the underlying problem facing individual graduates: a degree no longer guarantees a smooth transition into a job that matches what was studied.

Bandung fits this picture closely. The city hosts dozens of universities producing a steady stream of graduates every year, many competing for the same limited entry-level positions in West Java's private sector, creative industries, and startup scene. Lecturers and campus recruiters often describe

a recurring pattern: students finish coursework with strong grades but struggle when asked to apply that knowledge to an unfamiliar, real-world problem during an internship or interview. That points to something narrower than a general skills gap, and it is the reason this study looks specifically at knowledge application rather than employability in general.

Knowledge management is typically broken into five stages: acquisition, creation, sharing, storage, and application (Pellegrini et al., 2020). Application is the stage where knowledge stops being something a student merely holds and becomes something a student can demonstrably use. Chang et al. (2013) define it as the process of transferring existing knowledge into new situations and reflecting on how it applies. Nentl and Zietlow (2008), drawing on Bloom's taxonomy, describe it as the ability to use learned material in new and concrete situations, distinct from simply understanding a concept in the setting where it was first taught. For university students, this mostly happens through coursework, group projects, internships, and teaching practicums (PPL/P3K) any setting that requires moving beyond recall toward solving a problem the classroom did not explicitly prepare them for.

Employability, meanwhile, is best understood as a person's capacity to obtain and hold work that fits their goals, not a fixed credential. Fugate et al. (2004) frame it as a psycho-social construct built from career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital, evolving as a person's career-related experience accumulates. Knight & Yorke (2004), through their USEM model, emphasize a complementary angle: employability rests on the interaction of subject understanding, transferable skills, and belief in one's own efficacy. This study draws on both traditions, operationalizing employability through five dimensions: subject mastery, generic skills, career identity, personal flexibility, and career self-efficacy.

The link between knowledge application and employability is not just theoretical. Neşţian et al. (2021), studying business students, found knowledge application to be the strongest and most consistent predictor of perceived employment chances among the knowledge management dimensions they tested, ahead of both acquisition and sharing. That fits a simple logic: subject mastery is not fully realized until knowledge transfers to a new context; generic skills like communication and teamwork get exercised precisely in the settings where knowledge is applied; career identity is shaped by the experiences a person accumulates, and applying knowledge in real settings generates exactly that kind of experience; personal flexibility mirrors the adaptive capacity required to apply knowledge across varied, sometimes unfamiliar problems; and career self-efficacy, per Bandura (1997) and Betz (2004), grows most reliably out of successfully performing tasks, which is what applying knowledge actually is.

Despite this, most existing research on Indonesian graduate employability centers on curriculum design, internships, or general soft skills, treating knowledge application as a background assumption rather than something measured directly. Few studies have tested whether the degree to which Bandung's students apply their acquired knowledge through coursework, projects, internships, or teaching placements actually predicts how employable they consider themselves to be. Given Bandung's density of universities and its competitive graduate labor market, this setting offers a relevant place to test that relationship.

This positions the present study somewhat differently from prior employability research abroad. Rahmat et al. (2012), studying graduates of a single Malaysian faculty, measured employability through the skills graduates reported possessing, such as technical, soft, and entrepreneurial skills, without isolating application as a distinct predictor. Pereira et al. (2019), surveying students across five European universities, took a similarly descriptive approach, mapping which skills students considered important against those they felt they lacked. Neither study tests whether the degree to which knowledge is applied, as opposed to merely acquired or perceived as important, predicts a multidimensional employability outcome. This study addresses that gap by treating knowledge application as a single, measurable predictor and regressing it against employability captured across five dimensions, in a Bandung setting where internship and teaching-practicum experience is common

enough to test the relationship directly. Theoretically, confirming Neştian et al. (2021) finding outside a business-student sample would extend it to a different national context and a broader mix of disciplines and internship types. Practically, if the relationship holds here, it gives universities and internship coordinators in Bandung something more specific to act on than general employability rhetoric: evidence that how internships and teaching placements are structured, around genuine opportunities to apply coursework rather than mere completion, is what should be prioritized.

This study therefore investigates the influence of knowledge application on the employability of university students in Bandung who have completed an internship or teaching practicum. Based on the theoretical and empirical grounding above, the following hypothesis is proposed: Knowledge application has a positive and significant influence on the employability of university students in Bandung.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Each indicator is measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), following the measurement approach used in comparable knowledge management and employability studies (Chang et al., 2013; Neştian et al., 2021).

### Operational Definition of Variables

Table 1 presents the operational definitions of the independent and dependent variables used in this study, along with their dimensions and indicators.

**Table 1.** Operational Definition of Variables

| Variable                                                                                                                      | Dimension                                       | Indicator (example)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Scale      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Knowledge Application (X)                                                                                                     | Single-dimension construct (Chang et al., 2013) | Ability to transfer knowledge learned in class to new, concrete situations; ability to apply knowledge gained from personal reflection or assignments to real-world problems; frequency of applying acquired knowledge during internship/PPL, projects, or organizational activities | Likert 1-5 |
| Employability (Y)                                                                                                             | Subject Mastery                                 | Depth of understanding of core courses in one's field of study; ability to explain and apply disciplinary concepts beyond the classroom                                                                                                                                              | Likert 1-5 |
| Neştian et al., (2021); Hillage & Pollard (1998); Yorke (2004); Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden (2006); Pool & Sewell (2007) | Generic Skills                                  | Communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills applicable across contexts                                                                                                                                                                                    | Likert 1-5 |
|                                                                                                                               | Career Identity                                 | Clarity of one's professional self-concept; ability to articulate career goals and direction                                                                                                                                                                                         | Likert 1-5 |
|                                                                                                                               | Personal Flexibility                            | Willingness and ability to adapt to new tasks, environments, or unexpected changes in career-related situations                                                                                                                                                                      | Likert 1-5 |
|                                                                                                                               | Career Self-Efficacy                            | Confidence in one's ability to manage job search, interviews, and career-related challenges                                                                                                                                                                                          | Likert 1-5 |

Each indicator is measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), following the measurement approach used in comparable knowledge management and employability studies (Chang et al., 2013; Neştian et al., 2021).

The knowledge application scale was adapted from Chang et al.'s (2013) single-dimension construct of knowledge application, which measures the transfer of learned knowledge into new, concrete situations, and was operationalized into 4 items covering in-class transfer, application through personal reflection or assignments, and application during internship, PPL, or organizational activities. The employability scale draws on two established frameworks: subject mastery and generic skills follow Knight & Yorke's (2004) USEM model, while career identity, personal flexibility, and career

self-efficacy follow Fugate et al. (2004) psycho-social employability framework. After adaptation, the final instrument comprised 3 items for subject mastery, 5 for generic skills, 4 for career identity, 4 for personal flexibility, and 4 for career self-efficacy, totaling 20 employability items alongside the 4 knowledge application items, for 24 items overall. Item wording was adjusted from the source instruments to reflect the Indonesian higher education setting and the internship/PPL context referenced directly in the knowledge application items. Rather than expert content review, the instrument was piloted with 30 respondents prior to full distribution to check item validity and reliability, and items were finalized based on that trial before being administered to the 210-student sample.

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method to examine the influence of knowledge application (X) on the employability (Y) of university students in the city of Bandung, totaling 210 students.

### Population and Sample

Respondents were selected through purposive sampling based on two criteria: (1) actively enrolled as an undergraduate student at a university in Bandung, and (2) had completed an internship or teaching practicum (PPL/P3K) prior to data collection, confirmed through their own response to a screening item on the questionnaire. The second criterion was essential rather than incidental, since without that experience a respondent would have no concrete basis for answering the internship-related items in the knowledge application scale, only the classroom-based ones. Respondents who indicated they had not yet undertaken an internship or practicum were excluded on this basis. The final sample of 210 students was drawn from five universities in Bandung: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Universitas Logistik dan Bisnis Internasional (Ulbi), Politeknik Negeri Bandung (Polban), IKIP Siliwangi, and Universitas Islam Nusantara (Uninus).

A survey design was chosen because the objective of this study is to measure the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables through structured, numerically scored responses collected from a defined group of respondents, rather than to explore the phenomenon through an open-ended or interpretive approach. The design is cross-sectional, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time rather than tracked across a longitudinal period, consistent with prior studies examining the relationship between knowledge management processes and student employability (Neşţian et al., 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Item Validity Test Results

Table 2. Item Validity Test Results (Corrected Item-Total Correlation)

| Variable / Dimension  | Item No. | r (corrected item-total) | r-table (n=210, α=.05) | Status |
|-----------------------|----------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------|
| Knowledge Application | 1        | 0.565                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 2        | 0.577                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 3        | 0.577                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 4        | 0.562                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
| Subject Mastery       | 5        | 0.525                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 6        | 0.529                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 7        | 0.566                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
| Generic Skills        | 8        | 0.566                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 9        | 0.628                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 10       | 0.602                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 11       | 0.499                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 12       | 0.510                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
| Career Identity       | 13       | 0.465                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |
|                       | 14       | 0.558                    | 0.135                  | Valid  |

|                             |    |       |       |       |
|-----------------------------|----|-------|-------|-------|
|                             | 15 | 0.580 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 16 | 0.572 | 0.135 | Valid |
| <b>Personal Flexibility</b> | 17 | 0.515 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 18 | 0.511 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 19 | 0.482 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 20 | 0.408 | 0.135 | Valid |
| <b>Career Self-Efficacy</b> | 21 | 0.544 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 22 | 0.592 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 23 | 0.666 | 0.135 | Valid |
|                             | 24 | 0.583 | 0.135 | Valid |

Item validity was assessed using the corrected item-total correlation technique, correlating each item's score against the summed score of the remaining items within its own dimension. An item was considered valid if its correlation coefficient exceeded the critical r-table value for  $n = 210$  at  $\alpha = .05$  (two-tailed), which is .135. As shown in Table 2, all 24 items across both variables produced correlation coefficients well above this threshold, ranging from .408 (item 20, personal flexibility) to .666 (item 23, career self-efficacy). No item fell below the critical value, so all items were retained for the final analysis without modification. The lowest-performing item, item 20, still cleared the threshold by a comfortable margin, suggesting the instrument did not carry any item weak enough to warrant removal or revision at this stage.

### The Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted on the composite scores of Knowledge Application (four items, questions 16–19) and the five dimensions of Employability (twenty items, questions 40–59), based on responses from 210 students. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) without a neutral midpoint. Category intervals were calculated using the class-width formula (highest score minus lowest score, divided by the number of categories), giving an interval of  $(4 - 1) / 4 = 0.75$  and the following classification.

**Table 3.** Score Categorization

| Score Range | Category  |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1.00 – 1.75 | Very Low  |
| 1.76 – 2.50 | Low       |
| 2.51 – 3.25 | High      |
| 3.26 – 4.00 | Very High |

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics and Categorization of Variables

| Variable / Dimension      | Mean | SD   | Category | Low (%) | High (%) | Very High (%) |
|---------------------------|------|------|----------|---------|----------|---------------|
| Knowledge Application (X) | 3.19 | 0.37 | High     | 4.3     | 71.4     | 24.3          |
| Employability (Y)         | 3.11 | 0.32 | High     | 2.9     | 71.0     | 26.2          |

Both Knowledge Application and Employability fall into the High category overall. A mean score in the High category for both variables paints a fairly specific picture of who these 210 students are. On Knowledge Application, a mean of 3.19 suggests most respondents are not simply memorizing course material and setting it aside after the exam; they are already carrying what they learn into internships, PPL placements, group projects, and everyday academic decisions, and doing so with some consistency rather than occasionally. Chang et al. (2013) describe this kind of behavior, using knowledge across settings and reflecting on how it transfers, as the clearest sign that learning has moved past comprehension into something closer to competence.

The High score on Employability tells a similar story from the labor-market side. These students already see themselves as reasonably prepared: they trust their grasp of core subject matter, believe their communication and problem-solving skills hold up in a professional setting, and generally expect to cope with whatever the job market throws at them. Fugate et al. (2004) would read this as evidence

of a fairly developed employability profile, though not yet a finished one, since the construct is meant to keep shifting as a person's circumstances and confidence change.

Still, "High" is not "Very High," and the gap matters. Only about a quarter of respondents landed in the top band on either variable, and one dimension in particular, Career Identity, pulled the average down, with 14.3% of students reporting Low scores there. Read alongside the regression result, this points to a fairly consistent type of student across the sample: competent at applying what they know in structured, task-based settings such as coursework or internships, but comparatively less sure of themselves in the messier, more self-directed parts of career-building, like naming their own strengths to a stranger or building a professional network before anyone asks them to. Knight and Yorke's (2004) idea of "understanding" mastering subject matter well enough to transfer it captures the strength these students show; it says less about the identity work that seems to be lagging behind it.

None of this means the sample is unprepared. It suggests a group of students who have had real, useful chances to put their knowledge to work, most likely through the internships and teaching placements the sampling criteria required, but whose sense of themselves as future professionals has not caught up with their practical competence at quite the same pace.

### Instrument Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for each construct.

**Table 5.** Reliability Statistics

| Construct             | Cronbach's Alpha | Remark          |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Knowledge Application | 0.768            | Reliable        |
| Employability         | 0.915            | Highly reliable |

All constructs meet, or in the case of Personal Flexibility closely approach, the commonly cited threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The full Employability scale shows excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.915$ ).

### Simple Linear Regression Results

**Table 6.** Model Summary

| R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square |
|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 0.613 | 0.376    | 0.373             |

**Table 7.** ANOVA

| Model             | df       | F              | Sig.         |
|-------------------|----------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Regression</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>125.387</b> | <b>0.000</b> |
| Residual          | 208      |                |              |
| Total             | 209      |                |              |

**Table 8.** Coefficients

| Model                 | B     | Std. Error | t      | Sig.  |
|-----------------------|-------|------------|--------|-------|
| (Constant)            | 1.429 | -          | -      | -     |
| Knowledge Application | 0.527 | 0.047      | 11.198 | 0.000 |

Based on Table 8, the regression equation is:

$$Y = 1,429 + 0,527X$$

The calculated t-value of 11.198 (Sig. = 0.000) exceeds the critical t-table value of approximately 1.971 (df = 208,  $\alpha = .05$ , two-tailed), confirming that Knowledge Application has a statistically significant positive effect on Employability. H1 is accepted. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.376$ ) indicates that Knowledge Application accounts for 37.6% of the variance in student employability; the remaining 62.4% lies outside the scope of this model, and may include factors such as learning agility or knowledge management dimensions not tested here.

## Discussion

The results here fit comfortably within how graduate employability has been theorized more broadly. Tomlinson (2012), in one of the more widely cited reviews of the field, argues that employability should not be treated as a fixed credential a person either has or lacks, but as something accumulated through relevant experience over time, and shaped as much by how a person interprets and uses that experience as by the experience itself. That framing maps closely onto what the regression shows: students who report applying their knowledge more actively also report themselves as more employable, and the relationship is both positive and statistically significant ( $b = 0.527$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Tomlinson's review also makes a point worth flagging here, that employability research has tended to swing between treating it as a set of measurable skills and treating it as a more fluid, identity-based process. The findings in this study sit somewhere between those two poles: employability was measured here as five fairly concrete dimensions, yet the weakest of those dimensions, career identity, is precisely the one Tomlinson would call the more fluid, identity-based side of the construct.

Abelha et al. (2020) systematic review adds useful scale to that point. Working through 69 empirical studies across 27 countries, they found that the mismatch between what universities teach and what employers actually want shows up again and again as one of the most persistent themes in the graduate employability literature, regardless of country or field of study. That pattern is a useful check on how to read the results here: knowledge application explaining 37.6% of the variance in employability ( $R^2 = 0.376$ ) is a substantial share, but it leaves nearly two-thirds unexplained, which is consistent with what Abelha and colleagues describe as a genuinely multi-causal problem rather than something any single variable, however important, is likely to resolve on its own.

That 37.6% figure is worth sitting with a little longer than a single sentence. Three explanations seem plausible here, and they are not mutually exclusive. The first is measurement: both variables were captured through self-report on the same questionnaire at the same point in time, which tends to inflate correlations somewhat through common method variance, so the true relationship may be modestly smaller than the regression suggests. The second is that knowledge application, as operationalized in this study, only partly captures the internship experience it draws on. It measures how often and how confidently a student reports applying what they know, not the quality of the placement, the mentoring received during it, or how much real responsibility the student was given, and those factors plausibly matter as much as application frequency itself. The third, and probably the largest, is that employability depends on things well outside a student's control: family networks and social capital, per Seibert et al. (2001) discussed below; the specific labor market a graduate happens to be entering, which shifts by year and by sector; and individual differences in personality, particularly proactivity and self-presentation, that this study did not measure at all. None of that diminishes the finding. A predictor explaining more than a third of the variance in a construct as broad as employability is, by the standards of this literature, a reasonably strong result. But treating the remaining 62.4% as an unexamined leftover, rather than as a set of specific, nameable factors, would undersell what the data can responsibly support.

The internship and PPL requirement built into the sampling criteria for this study turns out to matter quite a bit for interpreting the results. Bawica (2021), studying 88 student interns, found that internship experience was consistently associated with stronger employability skills and a more positive orientation toward future careers, describing the internship as functioning almost like a rehearsal for professional life rather than just a resume line. That is a plausible explanation for why both knowledge application and employability came out in the "high" category for this sample overall: every respondent had already been through some version of the experience Bawica identifies as employability-building. It also raises a fair question for future research, namely whether these same results would hold for students without internship or PPL experience, since the sampling criteria here may have selected for a group already somewhat advantaged on the outcome being measured.

The dimension-level pattern in the data, strong on career self-efficacy and personal flexibility, weaker on career identity, has a reasonably clear explanation once matched against the relevant theory. Savickas & Porfeli (2012), whose Career Adapt-Abilities Scale underlies much of the current thinking on career self-efficacy and personal flexibility, describe adaptability as something built through repeated exposure to novel or changing situations rather than something taught directly in a classroom. Their four-part model, concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, treats confidence in particular as growing out of successfully handling unfamiliar tasks, which is exactly the kind of exposure an internship or teaching placement provides. Saks & Ashforth (1999) offer a complementary, more outcome-focused piece of evidence: in their study of job search behavior among recent graduates, self-efficacy tracked closely with actual job-search and prior work experience, not just general confidence, and it went on to predict real outcomes like interview success and employment status. Taken together, these two studies make the high scores on self-efficacy and flexibility in this sample less surprising. What is being measured is not abstract self-belief but something closer to earned confidence, built through the same practical experience that knowledge application also draws on.

Career identity is where the theory points to a genuine gap rather than just a lower score. Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden (2001) tested a social capital model of career success across 448 employees and found that network structure, not individual skill alone, was the strongest predictor of career outcomes, operating through three specific channels: access to information, access to resources, and access to sponsorship. None of those three channels are things a person builds by applying knowledge competently in an assigned task; they are built through relationships, and relationships require a different kind of deliberate effort than finishing a project well. That theoretical point lines up precisely with the item-level data here: item 51, on proactive professional networking, was among the lowest-scoring items in the entire questionnaire. Read through Seibert and colleagues' framework, this is not a minor gap. If network structure really is doing as much work in career outcomes as their data suggest, then the networking deficit visible in this sample may be quietly limiting the career-identity dimension in a way that no amount of additional knowledge application, on its own, would be likely to fix.

A similar logic applies to the low score on digital and numerical literacy (item 46,  $M = 2.96$ ), though the explanation here comes from labor-market data rather than social theory. Tee et al. (2024), surveying employers in Malaysia, found a measurable and persistent gap between the digital skills companies say they need from new graduates and the skills those graduates actually demonstrate, with data literacy and analytical tool use flagged as recurring weak points. Zhou et al. (2025) reached a comparable conclusion from a different angle, interviewing both alumni and employers, and found that expectations around digital skill have shifted meaningfully since the arrival of generative AI tools, faster, by their account, than most university curricula have been able to track. Neither study was conducted in Indonesia, and neither involved students specifically, but the fact that a comparable gap shows up in this Bandung sample suggests the issue is not a local curriculum failure so much as a broader lag between how quickly digital-skill expectations move and how quickly higher education can realistically follow.

Put together, the picture that emerges is fairly coherent. Knowledge application does real, measurable work in building employability, and the students in this sample, all of them with internship or PPL experience, show the benefit of that work clearly in their self-efficacy and adaptability scores. What knowledge application does not appear to do, at least not on its own, is build the two things that seem to need separate and more deliberate attention: the relational work of professional networking that Seibert and colleagues identify as central to career identity, and the technical fluency in digital and data tools that Tee et al. and Zhou et al. both find lagging behind employer expectations. Neither gap is really a knowledge-application problem in the sense this study defines it; both look more like the kind of thing that needs its own intervention rather than more of the same.

These findings carry a fairly direct implication for how universities structure the practical components of a degree. If knowledge application does the work the regression suggests, internship and PPL placements should be treated as instructional design problems, not administrative requirements to be checked off. That means building in structured reflection, asking students to document specific instances where classroom knowledge solved a real problem, rather than simply logging hours, and it means treating placement quality, not just placement completion, as something universities actively monitor. The career-identity and digital-literacy gaps identified above point to two more targeted interventions. Career services could build explicit networking components into internship programs, alumni panels, structured introductions to industry contacts, rather than leaving professional network-building to whatever a student happens to arrange informally. And given how quickly digital-skill expectations are shifting, per Tee et al. (2024) and Zhou et al. (2025), curriculum committees may need to treat data and digital-tool literacy as a standing agenda item revisited every few years rather than a module added once and left alone. None of this requires abandoning what is already working. It requires being more deliberate about the parts of the student experience that this study's data suggest are currently left to chance.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine whether knowledge application influences the employability of 210 university students in Bandung, most of whom had completed an internship or a teaching practicum (PPL/P3K). The data give a fairly clear answer: it does. Knowledge application had a positive, statistically significant effect on employability ( $b = 0.527$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and explained just over a third of the variance in students' self-reported employability ( $R^2 = 0.376$ ). Put plainly, students who more actively transferred what they learned into real, unfamiliar situations, rather than leaving it in the classroom, reported themselves as meaningfully more job-ready.

Both variables sat in the High category overall, which suggests this sample is not starting from a weak position. Students trust their grasp of core subject knowledge, apply it reasonably well in practical settings, and generally believe they can hold their own in a competitive labour market. But the picture is not uniform across the five employability dimensions tested. Career Identity came out weakest, both in mean score and in the share of students reporting Low levels (14.3%), and the specific items that dragged scores down, professional networking and digital/numerical literacy, point to gaps that are narrower and more fixable than a general lack of readiness. In short: these students know how to apply what they've learned when the task is handed to them, but they are less confident describing themselves, or actively building the kind of professional network and technical fluency that recruiters increasingly expect.

Most respondents in this sample already have decent habits around applying what they learn. That's the more interesting finding here, honestly, not the  $R^2$  by itself. What seems to matter more for many of them going forward isn't more coursework. It's more deliberate work on career identity: sitting down and writing an actual answer to "what do I want to do and why," practicing how to talk about their own strengths without sounding rehearsed, and building a professional network before they need one for a job search rather than scrambling to build one during it.

Given how much stronger Knowledge Application scores were than Career Identity, institutions might get more out of expanding structured, real-world learning opportunities, more internship placements, industry-linked capstone projects, teaching practicums for education students, than out of adding more theory-heavy coursework. At the same time, the low score on item 51 (professional networking) and item 46 (digital/data literacy) points to two fairly specific interventions: career mentoring or alumni-networking programs to help students build the relational side of employability, and short, practical modules on data analysis and digital tools, which do not require overhauling a curriculum but do require someone to own the gap. Career center in particular seem well placed to

run identity-focused workshops (self-assessment, personal branding, mock interviews) alongside the more common career-fair and job-posting services they already offer.

Because knowledge application accounted for only 37.6% of the variance in employability, roughly two-thirds is coming from somewhere else. Testing additional predictors, learning agility being an obvious candidate given the broader research this study sits within, would help explain more of that gap. A longitudinal design, following students from before an internship through to their first months of employment, would also say more about causality than the cross-sectional design used here, which can only speak to association at a single point in time. Finally, given the assumption violations noted above, future work might consider robust standard errors, bootstrapped confidence intervals, or a non-parametric alternative to simple linear regression, and would benefit from comparing results across a broader range of universities and programs than the purposive sample used in this study allowed.

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