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Comparative Analysis of the Mental Readiness of Urban and Rural Students in the Industrial Context

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ABSTRACT

Background: The transformation of modern industry requires students to be mentally prepared for the workforce; therefore, educational institutions must ensure that character development and psychological resilience are integral components of the learning process. *Aim:* This study aims to analyze the level of students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world, compare differences in readiness based on regional background, and examine the contribution of character education to the reinforcement of work Readiness. *Method:* The research employed a descriptive-comparative quantitative approach with a sample of students from urban and rural backgrounds. The measurement instrument used a mental readiness scale encompassing dimensions of self-confidence, resilience, emotional regulation, and adaptability. *Results and Discussion:* The results indicate that the majority of students fall into the high mental readiness category, with a higher proportion of urban students than rural students. These findings are consistent with the literature, which suggests that differences in access to education, exposure to technology, and social experiences influence individuals' psychological readiness. *Conclusions:* The study concludes that character education plays a significant role in shaping mental readiness and can be integrated into higher education, industrial guidance, and counseling programs. This research recommends developing character-based counseling interventions and industry practice experiences to strengthen students' readiness to enter the professional world.

Keywords: Mental Readiness, Character Education, Students, Industrial Guidance and Counseling, Industrial Work Readiness

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INTRODUCTION

Industrial transformation over the past decade has demanded that students develop strong mental readiness before entering the professional workforce. Rapid technological advancement, job automation, and global competition have significantly altered the industrial landscape, challenging students not only in their knowledge but also in their psychological capacity and mental resilience. Research findings show that students generally demonstrate a high level of mental readiness, although some remain in the moderate and low categories, which require systematic intervention. This condition indicates that mental readiness is not a static state but a psychological variable that can be developed through appropriate educational systems and social experiences. This phenomenon underscores the urgency of scholarly inquiry into students' mental readiness as a foundation for confronting the realities of industrial work.

Theoretically, studies on students' mental readiness have been discussed from various perspectives. Rahmawati (2020) argues that mental readiness develops through exposure to dynamic and challenging learning environments, while Santosa (2018) emphasizes the importance of emotional control, self-confidence, and self-adaptation in building mental capacity for the workplace. Ibrahim (2019) found that students with broader access to information tend to exhibit better resilience and readiness than those with limited access. Other findings by Basri and Mulyani (2023) indicate that students from rural areas can demonstrate high readiness when provided with adequate educational support. Thus, previous studies have identified factors shaping mental readiness; however, comparative investigations based on students' regional backgrounds remain an open area for deeper academic exploration.

Based on empirical data revealing differences in mental readiness categories between students from urban and rural areas, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of students' mental readiness. Although the majority of respondents fall into the high category, the presence of moderate and low categories requires further examination to

identify causal variables and relevant strengthening strategies. Accordingly, this study formulates three main research questions: (1) What is the level of students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world? (2) Are there significant differences in mental readiness between students from urban and rural backgrounds? and (3) to what extent does character education contribute to students' mental readiness for entering the workforce? These research questions serve as the basis for expanding the analysis and strengthening the study's theoretical arguments. Therefore, this research is designed to fill gaps and enrich the literature on student readiness for entry into the modern industrial sector.

This study focuses on descriptive analysis to explore students' mental readiness to face the challenges of the industrial world and the relevance of character education as a foundation for strengthening professional mental capacity. The results indicate that students from urban areas show a higher proportion of readiness categories; however, students from rural areas also demonstrate strong developmental potential when provided with adequate academic environmental support. This finding aligns with Pratama (2020), who asserts that character education is a key determinant in shaping professional personality and psychological resilience. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in mapping mental readiness issues based on geographical background and their implications for higher education curriculum design. Accordingly, this article is expected to strengthen the academic literature and provide practical recommendations for developing educational systems that are more responsive to industrial demands.

Students' Mental Readiness in Facing the Industrial World

Mental readiness is a fundamental psychological factor that influences an individual's ability to navigate dynamic, high-pressure work environments. According to Santosa (2018), mental readiness encompasses self-confidence, emotional control, and adaptability to structural changes within organizational contexts. Findings from Study 1 indicate that the majority of students fall into the high mental readiness category, suggesting that they possess relatively well-developed adaptive capacities. This aligns with Rahmawati (2020), who posits that students with structured academic experiences and exposure to professional activities tend to have stronger self-regulation. Therefore, it can be affirmed that mental readiness is not solely a product of personality traits but is also shaped by educational systems and social experiences.

Furthermore, support for Study 1 findings can be traced to Nursalam (2021), who asserts that mental readiness develops significantly through challenging, problem-solving-oriented learning stimuli. Campus environments that implement collaborative learning can enhance students' resilience in the face of industrial pressures. This contributes to the high levels of mental readiness observed in the research. However, Widodo (2017) cautions that mental readiness may decline if students are not provided with opportunities to develop independence and flexible thinking. Therefore, higher education programs must offer continuous spaces for emotional stability and psychological resilience.

Differences in Mental Readiness Based on Students' Regional Background

Findings from Study 2 show that urban students exhibit a higher level of mental readiness than rural students. This can be explained through Ibrahim's (2019) concept of Stimulus Environmental Exposure, which suggests that exposure to job competition, technology, and career-related information contributes to the development of individual mental resilience. Urban students generally have broader access to information sources and training opportunities, resulting in stronger mental readiness. Additionally, Astuti (2022) emphasizes that interaction with competitive social systems encourages students to develop self-control, resilience, and goal orientation. Thus, these findings are consistent with theories on the influence of environmental context on the development of mental readiness.

Nevertheless, differences in mental readiness between urban and rural students should not be interpreted as a deficiency in any group. Basri & Mulyani (2023) note that students from rural areas often demonstrate resilience in work contexts when provided with appropriate learning stimuli. Study 2 findings reveal that the high-readiness category is also present among rural students, albeit at lower rates. This aligns with Hamid (2017), who argues that mental capacity can develop through systematic and supportive character education interventions. In other words, access to education and practical work experience remain factors that can minimize the gap in mental readiness across geographical regions.

The Role of Character Education in Strengthening Students' Mental Readiness

Character education is a crucial determinant in shaping students' mental readiness for the industrial world. Findings from Study 3 indicate that students with strong character development exhibit more stable mental readiness and greater adaptability in work environments. This aligns with Pratama (2020), who states that character education can foster values such as responsibility, discipline, and professional work quality. Lestari (2016) further notes that character internalization affects not only behavior but also an individual's psychological readiness when facing career pressures. Hence, character education is a foundational element in shaping students' mental readiness.

Moreover, this study reinforces Nugroho's (2024) moral development theory, which asserts that character develops through habitual behaviors, cognitive stimulation, and emotional engagement in both academic and social contexts. Campus programs such as leadership training, industrial internships, and reflective discussions serve as strategic spaces for cultivating professional student mentalities. Study 3

recommends that educational institutions expand character development systems by integrating practical, context-based curricula. In line with Susanto (2025), the synergy between character education and vocational education can accelerate students' readiness to enter the workforce. Therefore, character education can be positioned as a key variable in enhancing the quality of university graduates.

METHOD

This study was conducted to obtain an empirical overview of students' mental readiness to face the industrial world and to analyze the influence of geographical background and the role of character education in mediating such readiness. The research employed a quantitative, descriptive-comparative design to describe the phenomenon and compare levels of mental readiness across regional backgrounds. According to Creswell (2017), a quantitative approach is effective for measuring social phenomena in a structured manner and allows for more objective generalization of findings. This design was selected to ensure that the characteristics of mental readiness could be represented through numerical data and categorical distributions. Accordingly, this data-driven study provides measurable empirical contributions to the development of theories on students' mental readiness.

The study was conducted to address the need for a factual analysis of students' readiness in higher education. The research subjects were active students in the preparatory phase of entering the workforce or enrolled in advanced semesters of their academic programs. The research sites were selected from higher education institutions with student populations from both urban and rural areas to produce a comprehensive comparison. This is consistent with Sugiyono's (2020) view that selecting subjects and research sites must be relevant to the variables under investigation to ensure valid and representative results. Through appropriate sampling, this study can more accurately explain patterns of mental readiness.

The rationale for focusing on university students is that the transition to the world of work marks a critical phase in mental development that shapes professional readiness. Students are in a phase of character formation, internalization of work values, and adjustment to the demands of the global industrial environment. Basri and Mulyani (2023) argue that university students constitute the most strategic population for examining mental readiness because they are in the process of consolidating their academic and career identities. Variations in regional background were taken into account to examine how differences in educational access and social environments influence mental readiness. Therefore, this study holds academic urgency in providing evaluative data for higher education institutions.

The research procedures were carried out through a series of systematic methodological steps: instrument development, data collection, and data analysis. The instrument used was a psychological questionnaire developed from indicators of mental readiness, including self-confidence, emotional regulation, resilience, and adaptability. Instrument development was guided by Pratama's (2020) mental readiness measurement model, which emphasizes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components as fundamental to work readiness. The questionnaire was distributed online to ensure efficiency and equitable data collection.

Data processing was conducted using frequency tabulation techniques and score categorization based on predetermined value ranges to identify the percentage of students' mental readiness levels. The collected data were then classified into three categories—low, moderate, and high—to facilitate result mapping. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2019), score categorization is a valid analytical procedure for quantitatively describing respondent characteristics. The results were presented in frequency distribution tables to ensure clarity and enable comparative analysis between urban and rural respondents. Through this approach, the data could be interpreted systematically and measured.

The analytical technique employed was descriptive analysis, which aimed to portray the phenomenon of mental readiness factually and to identify comparative patterns among respondent groups. The analysis used percentages, graphs, and value comparisons to examine trends in students' mental readiness across the research indicators. Creswell (2020) notes that descriptive analysis is particularly effective in clearly and systematically revealing patterns of social data distribution. The analytical results served as the basis for drawing conclusions and formulating theoretical discussions in this article. Thus, the applied methodology provides a strong foundation for empirical, accurate, and academically grounded research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on a descriptive analysis of 200 respondents, a general overview of students' mental readiness to face the industrial world was obtained. The data indicate that respondents were classified into three categories—low, moderate, and high—based on their total mental readiness scores. The frequency and percentage calculations show that the majority of students were in the high mental readiness category (57.5%), with 12.5% in the moderate category and 30% in the low category. These findings suggest that more than half of the students have relatively optimal psychological readiness to enter a competitive, highly demanding industrial work environment.

When examined by place of origin, students from rural areas showed a more varied distribution of scores. Approximately 37% of students in this group fell into the low category, 11% into the moderate category, and the majority—52%—into the high mental readiness category. This pattern

indicates that although a notable proportion of rural students exhibit low readiness, more than half still demonstrate strong mental readiness for entering the workforce. This condition suggests that non-geographical factors such as the educational environment, campus organizations, social experiences, and patterns of character development may play a more substantial role in supporting students' mental readiness.

In contrast, students from urban areas showed a distribution more strongly oriented toward the high category than did their rural counterparts. A total of 66% of urban students were classified as high, 16% as moderate, and 18% as low. In percentage terms, high mental readiness was more dominant in this group than among rural students. This finding may indicate that access to educational facilities, information, and exposure to career competition dynamics in urban settings contribute to strengthening students' mental readiness to confront the realities of the industrial world.

From a direct comparative perspective, both rural and urban groups exhibited the highest proportions in the high mental readiness category. However, urban students had a higher percentage in this category (66%) than rural students (52%). These findings lead to the preliminary conclusion that geographical background may contribute to mental readiness. Still, it is not the sole determining factor, as students from rural areas also achieved levels of readiness approaching those of their urban counterparts.

Another important finding of this study is that 30% of students overall remain in the low readiness category. This percentage indicates that a substantial proportion of students have not yet developed optimal mental readiness, particularly in terms of self-regulation, adaptability, resilience to pressure, and preparedness to accept the target-oriented culture of the industrial sector. This condition underscores the need for more systematic character and mental-readiness strengthening interventions, supported by institutions, soft-skill training, and internship programs that foster authentic psychological learning experiences.

Regarding the moderate category, the 12.5% proportion positions this group as a transitional zone with strong potential for improvement through character development approaches and the maturation of industrial-world awareness. Students in this category tend to display adaptive tendencies but lack stability in mental resilience and stress management. Appropriate developmental interventions may shift this group toward the high category through psychological preparation, academic mentoring, and structured work experiences.

Based on the overall findings, it can be affirmed that students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world is at a relatively good level. The dominance of the high category reflects strong psychological capital, while the presence of low and moderate categories indicates the need for more targeted character-strengthening programs. Thus, the results of this study not only describe the distribution of students' mental readiness but also identify strategic areas for development, which serve as the basis for recommendations in the discussion section.

Table 1. Categories of Mental Readiness Based on Place of Origin

Mental Readiness Score Categories	Place of Origin				Total	
	Rural		Urban			
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Low	46	37%	14	18%	60	30,0%
Moderate	13	11%	12	16%	25	12,5%
High	64	52%	51	66%	115	57,5%
Total	123	100%	77	100%	200	100,0%

Based on the table, students' overall mental readiness is dominated by the high category at 57.5% (115 respondents), followed by the low category at 30.0% (60 respondents) and the moderate category at 12.5% (25 respondents). This distribution indicates that the majority of students already possess relatively good psychological readiness to cope with the demands of the industrial world.

When examined by place of origin, students from urban areas show a higher proportion of high mental readiness (66%) than those from rural areas (52%), while the low category is more prevalent among rural students (37%) than among urban students (18%). This pattern suggests differences in mental readiness influenced by social and educational environmental contexts.

Nevertheless, the high percentage of students in the high mental readiness category across both groups indicates that place of origin is not the sole determining factor. Students' mental readiness is also shaped by educational experiences, character development, and academic support, all of which play an important role in preparing students to enter the industrial workforce.

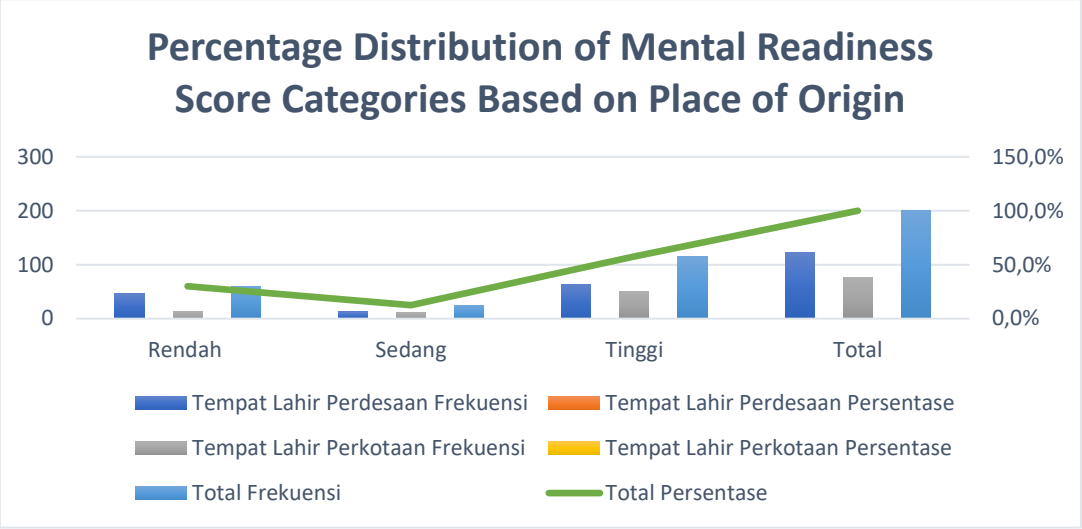

Figure 1. Graphical Results of Students' Mental Readiness Based on Place of Origin

Based on the diagram, the high mental readiness category dominates among both rural and urban students, with a higher percentage among urban students than among rural students. This finding indicates that most students have developed sufficient mental readiness to meet the demands of the industrial world.

The graph also shows that the low category is more prevalent among students from rural areas than those from urban areas. In contrast, the moderate category appears in relatively small proportions in both groups. This pattern suggests differences in levels of mental readiness influenced by environmental background.

Overall, the upward trend of the total percentage in the high category confirms that students' mental readiness at the aggregate level is relatively strong. However, targeted strengthening efforts are still required for students in the low-readiness category to minimize gaps in mental readiness.

Discussion

General characteristics of students' mental readiness and their implications

Based on the research data, the majority of students (57.5%) fall into the high mental readiness category, while 30% are classified as low and 12.5% as moderate. These findings indicate that most students possess adequate psychological capital to meet the demands of the industrial world. This condition is consistent with previous studies showing that the attainment of soft skills and intrapersonal skills is positively correlated with students' work readiness.

However, the presence of approximately 30% of students in the low category indicates that a significant proportion has not yet achieved optimal mental readiness—particularly in terms of self-regulation, adaptability, and resilience. This serves as an important warning that although the overall proportion of high readiness is dominant, students with low readiness may face a higher risk of adaptation difficulties when entering the industrial workforce. These findings support the argument that reliance on hard skills alone is insufficient and that psychosocial aspects require serious attention.

Differences in Mental Readiness Based on Regional Background (Rural vs. Urban)

Analysis by place of origin shows that students from urban areas have a higher percentage of high mental readiness (66%) than those from rural areas (52%). This finding aligns with the literature on differences in stress and psychological pressure between urban and rural populations. For example, studies conducted in China indicate that expressions of stress differ between rural and urban communities, with urban stress more closely associated with external factors such as employment and economic demands. This may suggest that urban students are exposed to competitive dynamics, career pressures, and labor-market expectations earlier, thereby developing greater mental readiness.

Nevertheless, the finding that 52% of rural students are also classified in the high readiness category indicates that a rural background does not automatically hinder mental readiness. This suggests that other factors—such as character education, organizational experience, soft-skill training, and individual motivation—may play a crucial role in preparing students' mental readiness regardless of place of origin. This supports studies emphasizing the importance of soft skills and self-efficacy as key determinants of work readiness. Therefore, while socio-geographical aspects are relevant, they are not the sole determinants; character education and soft-skill interventions can serve as effective equalizers.

Implications of Soft Skills, Industrial Experience, and Character Programs in Facilitating the Transition to the Industrial World

The finding that the majority of students are already in the high mental readiness category can be interpreted as an indication that educational institutions—either consciously or implicitly—have succeeded in instilling non-academic capital relevant to the industrial world. This is consistent with studies demonstrating that soft skills, including intrapersonal and

interpersonal competencies, significantly influence work readiness.

However, given that a proportion of students still fall into the low and moderate categories, these results indicate the need for more systematic character education programs, soft skills training, and practical experiences, such as internships. The literature suggests that a combination of soft skills and internship experience increases the likelihood of work readiness. Therefore, higher education institutions are encouraged to integrate soft-skill curricula and structured work practice opportunities as part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance students' employability and psychological stability as they transition into the industrial workforce.

Table II. Comparison of Mental Readiness Percentages Based on Regional Background

Region of Origin	High readiness (%)	Moderate readiness (%)	Low readiness (%)
Rural	52 %	11 %	37 %
Urban	66 %	16 %	18 %
Total	57,5 %	12,5 %	30 %

Note: Data are based on the findings of the present study

This table helps visualize differences in students' mental readiness by regional background. It shows that, despite existing differences, students from rural areas still exhibit a substantial proportion of high mental readiness.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the majority of students exhibit a high level of mental readiness to face the industrial world. However, some groups exhibit moderate and low levels of readiness that require further attention. Differences in mental readiness between students from urban and rural backgrounds appear significant; however, both groups exhibit substantial proportions of high readiness. These findings strengthen the argument that character education, soft skills, self-efficacy, and practical experiences such as internships make important contributions to shaping students' mental readiness. The results also confirm that place of birth is not a single determinant of mental readiness but rather functions as a contextual factor that may strengthen or weaken learning experiences and character development. Accordingly, this study underscores the need for the systematic integration of character-based curricula and soft-skill training to support students' transition into the professional workforce.

This study has several strengths, particularly its comprehensive mapping of students' mental readiness and its comparisons based on rarely explored geographical variables. The research instrument was applied consistently, enabling an objective depiction of students' psychological readiness. Nevertheless, the study also has limitations, including a sample size that does not yet represent the broader student population, requiring cautious interpretation of the findings. In addition, the variables examined were limited to mental readiness and did not incorporate other relevant factors such as technical readiness, work culture, or industrial literacy. The quantitative method employed may also introduce respondent perception bias, indicating the need for further exploration to enrich a more holistic understanding.

Based on these findings and limitations, future research is recommended to expand the sample size and conduct comparisons across educational levels and fields of study to enhance the generalizability of the results. Subsequent studies are encouraged to adopt a mixed-methods approach to more deeply explore the characteristics of mental readiness through data triangulation. Furthermore, the development of intervention models involving character education, soft skills training, and realistic industrial simulations should be tested experimentally to assess their effectiveness in measurably improving mental readiness. Future research should also incorporate additional variables, such as work adaptation, resilience, technological literacy, and internship experience, as important predictors of readiness for entry into the industrial sector. Through these efforts, further research can make more applicable contributions to educational institutions in preparing a competitive, professionally competent generation.

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