

Character Education as a Foundation for Students' Mental Readiness in Facing the Dynamics of the Modern Industrial World

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: April 2025	<p>Background: The increasingly complex development of the industrial world requires university graduates to possess strong mental readiness and well-internalized character. The gap between academic competence and psychological readiness remains a critical issue in higher education. Aim: This study aims to analyze the effect of character education on students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world when viewed from economic status. Method: This research employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive-correlational design. Data were collected through the distribution of Likert-scale questionnaires to 200 active university students. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistical analysis and correlation testing. Result and Discussions: The results indicate that the majority of students fall into the high mental readiness category, while levels of character education are predominantly in the moderate to high categories. The discussion of the findings suggests a positive relationship between character education and mental readiness, particularly among students with middle and high economic status. Conclusion: This study concludes that character education plays a significant role in building students' mental readiness. Recommendations are aimed at strengthening context-based, character-based learning designs and advancing intervention-based research.</p> <p>Keywords: Character Education, Economic Status, Industrial World, Mental Readiness, Students.</p>
Accepted: May 2025	
Published: June 2025	
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Citation Information: Sarbany, S., Farell, A., Marsela, R., Sari, Y. S. ., Carlone, V. C. ., Karyanti, K., Solikin, A. ., & Fatchurrahman, M. (2025). Character Education as a Foundation for Students' Mental Readiness in Facing the Dynamics of the Modern Industrial World. *Suluh: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling*, 11(Spesial-1), 64–69. <https://doi.org/10.33084/suluh.v11i1Spesial-I.12360>

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly competitive dynamics of the industrial world require university graduates to possess not only academic competence but also strong mental readiness. Field observations indicate that some students experience difficulties adapting to work pressure, productivity demands, and changes in organizational culture. This condition is consistent with research findings that reveal considerable variation in students' mental readiness, particularly among groups with specific socioeconomic backgrounds. Angela Duckworth (2016) emphasizes that mental resilience is a crucial factor in determining individual success in modern work environments. Moreover, the rising prevalence of work-related stress among recent graduates highlights a gap between psychological readiness and the demands of the industrial world. This social reality underscores the urgency of strengthening non-cognitive aspects, particularly through character education, as a foundation for developing students' mental readiness.

A review of the literature over the past decade indicates that character education plays a significant role in

shaping individuals' readiness to face the world of work. Thomas Lickona (2015) argues that character education can internalize values such as responsibility, discipline, and integrity that are highly relevant to professional settings. Research by Carol Dweck (2019) demonstrates that a growth mindset enhances individuals' capacity to cope with challenges and failure. Other studies affirm that self-efficacy and emotional regulation are important predictors of students' work readiness. Nevertheless, much of the existing research has focused primarily on technical competencies, leaving the role of character education as a foundation for mental readiness relatively underexplored. Therefore, this study seeks to extend understanding of the contribution of character education to the development of students' mental readiness.

This study is grounded in empirical findings indicating differences in students' mental readiness when viewed from a socioeconomic perspective. Preliminary results suggest that students from middle and high economic backgrounds tend to exhibit more stable levels of mental readiness compared to those from lower economic groups. These findings provide an important basis for formulating the research focus, which

emphasizes the role of character education as a strategic factor in reducing disparities in mental readiness. Accordingly, this study is designed to address several research questions: the level of students' character education in facing the industrial world, the level of students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world, and the relationship between character education and mental readiness when viewed from students' economic status. These questions are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of internal and external factors influencing students' readiness.

Conceptually, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of career guidance and counseling services in higher education. It enriches the field of educational psychology by offering an integrative perspective that links character development and mental readiness within a socioeconomic context. James Heckman (2020) emphasizes the importance of investing in non-cognitive skills as part of human capital development. By examining the relationship between character education and mental readiness, this study is expected to serve as a reference for designing policies aimed at strengthening students' soft skills. Furthermore, the findings are anticipated to provide an empirical basis for the development of curricula that are more adaptive to the needs of the industrial world. Through this approach, the study aims to more effectively bridge the gap between education and the world of work.

METHOD

This study is based on the need to comprehensively understand the relationship between character education and students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world. The approach employed is a quantitative method with a descriptive-correlational design, which allows researchers to systematically identify patterns of relationships among variables. This design was selected because it can objectively describe empirical phenomena through structured measurement. John W. Creswell (2018) states that correlational designs are effective for revealing relationships among variables within social contexts. In addition, this design is relevant for generating numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. Therefore, the chosen research design is considered appropriate for exploring the dynamics of character education and students' mental readiness.

The study was conducted in a higher education environment characterized by heterogeneity in students' academic and social backgrounds. The research site was selected due to its relevance to the context of the industrial world and the development of students' soft skills. The research subjects consisted of active students from various study programs who had been exposed to both academic and non-academic experiences. James Arthur (2017) emphasizes that institutional context plays an important role in shaping individuals' character and work readiness. The selection of the research site also took into account accessibility and the

availability of adequate data. Accordingly, the findings are expected to realistically represent students' conditions.

The selection of research subjects was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, whereby respondents were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. These criteria included active student status and willingness to participate in the study. A total of 200 students was considered sufficient to produce stable statistical representations. Daniel Kahneman (2016) notes that an adequate sample size can enhance the reliability of quantitative research findings. In addition, the diversity of respondents' characteristics was considered to enrich data variation. Thus, the research subjects are expected to represent the population under study.

The research stages began with the development of research instruments in the form of Likert-scale questionnaires measuring two main variables, namely character education and mental readiness in facing the industrial world. The instruments were then subjected to validity and reliability testing to ensure measurement quality. Joseph F. Hair Jr. (2019) emphasizes the importance of validity and reliability testing in instrument-based research. After the instruments were deemed appropriate, the questionnaires were distributed to respondents both in person and online. The data collection process was conducted within a predetermined time frame. Through this procedure, the collected data are expected to reflect actual empirical conditions.

Data processing was carried out through several stages, beginning with editing, coding, and tabulating the data into statistical software. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis to obtain mean values, frequencies, and percentages. Andy Field (2018) emphasizes that descriptive analysis serves to provide a systematic overview of data patterns. In addition, the data were classified based on economic status categories to examine differences in distribution across groups. Data presentation was conducted through tables and diagrams to facilitate visual understanding. Thus, the processed data can be interpreted more comprehensively.

Data analysis used correlation tests to examine the relationship between character education and students' mental readiness. The analysis also involved examining differences by economic status, a contextual variable. Geoffrey Norman (2020) states that correlational analysis provides an empirical basis for understanding relationships among psychosocial constructs. The interpretation of the analysis results was carried out with reference to theoretical frameworks and findings from previous studies. Subsequently, the data were presented narratively to reinforce the quantitative results obtained. Through this approach, the study is expected to produce findings that are valid, reliable, and academically relevant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Students' Mental Readiness in Facing the Industrial World

The results of the study indicate that the majority of students fall into the high mental readiness category, accounting for 57.50%. This finding suggests that, in general, students have developed adaptive capacity and psychological resilience to cope with the dynamics of the industrial world. This result is consistent with Angela Duckworth's (2016) assertion that perseverance and mental resilience are key factors in individuals' readiness to face work-related challenges. The present study also reinforces previous findings indicating that academic experiences and non-formal training contribute to the development of mental readiness. However, the proportion of students in the low readiness category,

which still reaches 30.00%, indicates the presence of a group that remains psychologically vulnerable.

In contrast to the findings of this study, research conducted by Albert Bandura (2018) emphasizes self-efficacy as the primary determinant of work readiness, whereas the present study finds that mental readiness is more strongly influenced by factors of adaptation and emotional regulation. This difference suggests that cultural context and educational environments play a role in shaping students' orientations toward mental readiness. The findings of this study contribute new insights by emphasizing that internal self-regulation factors play a more dominant role than confidence alone. Thus, this research adds a new dimension to the understanding of students' mental readiness.

Table I. Mental Readiness

Score Category	Mental Readiness Economic Status							
	Low		Moderate		High		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Low	6	24.00%	52	31.14%	2	25.00%	60	30.00%
Moderate	5	20.00%	20	11.98%	0	0.00%	25	12.50%
High	14	56.00%	95	56.89%	6	75.00%	115	57.50%
Total	25	100.00%	167	100.00%	8	100.00%	200	100.00%

Based on Table I, the distribution of students' mental readiness shows clear proportional differences across

categories. To facilitate understanding of these distribution patterns, the data are visualized in Figure I.

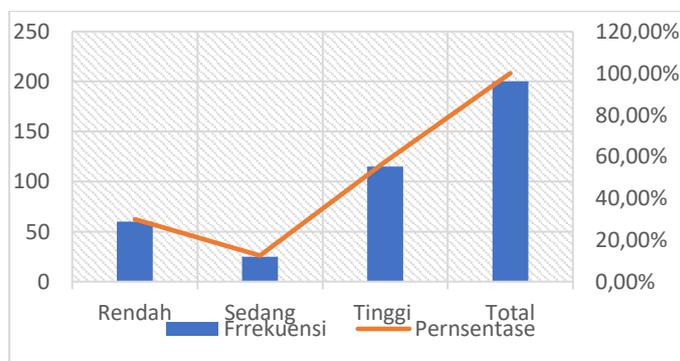


Figure I. Mental Readiness Grafik

Students' Character Education Based on Economic Status

The results show that students' character education is predominantly categorized at the moderate level (53.50%). This finding supports Thomas Lickona's (2015) view that character education is a gradual process that develops through social and academic experiences. The study also strengthens previous research indicating that value internalization has not yet been evenly achieved among students. Nevertheless, the proportion of students in the high character education category, reaching 43.50%, indicates progress in efforts to

strengthen character development within higher education institutions.

In contrast to the findings of James Heckman (2020), who emphasizes the dominant role of family capital in character formation, this study finds that the academic environment exerts an influence that is no less significant than family background. This finding adds a perspective that formal education in higher education institutions can serve as an agent of character change. However, economic status still plays a role in shaping students' opportunities for self-development. This indicates that the interaction between social capital and

academic capital is a determining factor in students' character formation.

Table II. Character Education

Score Category	Character Education Economic Status						Total	
	Low		Moderate		High			
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Low	2	8.00%	4	2.40%	0	0.00%	6	3.00%
Moderate	13	52.00%	92	55.09%	2	25.00%	107	53.50%
High	10	40.00%	71	42.51%	6	75.00%	87	43.50%
Total	25	100.00%	167	100.00%	8	100.00%	200	100.00%

As shown in Table II, students' levels of character education vary across categories. To further clarify the distribution

trends, the research results are visualized in the form of a graph in Figure II.

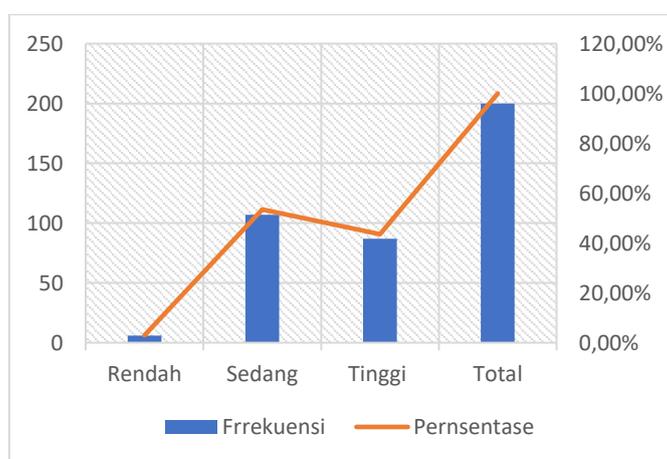


Figure II. Character Education Graphic

The Relationship between Character Education and Mental Readiness Viewed from Economic Status

The results indicate a consistent relationship between character education and students' mental readiness, particularly among students from middle and high economic status groups. Students with higher levels of character education tend to demonstrate more stable mental readiness in facing the demands of the industrial world. This finding is consistent with social learning theory proposed by Albert Bandura (2017), which states that adaptive behavior is formed through the internalization of values and social experiences. The study reinforces empirical findings that suggest character quality serves as a foundation for individuals' psychological resilience. Nevertheless, students from lower economic status groups exhibit wider variation, indicating the presence of additional external factors influencing mental readiness.

In contrast to Carol Dweck's (2019) findings, which emphasize the primary role of a growth mindset, this study finds that the integration of character values plays a more concrete role in mental readiness than mindset alone. This finding contributes to an expanded conceptualization of mental readiness that extends beyond cognitive aspects to include

moral and social dimensions. Thus, this study offers a new perspective that mental readiness is the result of synergy between personal character and contextual economic factors.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that students with higher levels of character education tend to demonstrate greater mental readiness in facing the industrial world. This finding suggests that the internalization of character values plays an important role in shaping students' psychological resilience and adaptive capacity. Within the context of industrial guidance and counseling, character education functions as a psychological foundation that strengthens students' work readiness. This finding is consistent with Lickona's (2015) view that consistently internalized character influences individuals' adaptive behavior in professional environments. The present study also supports Savickas (2019), who emphasizes that work readiness is determined not only by technical competence but also by psychological readiness and personal values. Thus, the findings of this study reinforce empirical evidence that character education is an essential component of students' mental readiness.

Nevertheless, this study also offers a new perspective by showing that character education at a moderate level still

requires strengthening in order to produce optimal mental readiness. In contrast to the study by Wibowo and Hastuti (2021), which found a dominance of high character education among vocational students, the present study indicates that institutional context and learning approaches also influence outcomes. Bandura (2018) explains that personal values and beliefs exert a stronger influence when reinforced through social experiences and self-reflection. In this regard, industrial guidance and counseling play a strategic role as a means of strengthening the internalization of character values toward work-related mental readiness. Counseling services integrated with character education can assist students in developing emotional regulation, stress resilience, and professional attitudes. Therefore, this study implies that the development of students' work readiness should be pursued through a holistic approach that integrates character education and industrial guidance and counseling.

CONCLUSION

This study yields a primary finding that character education plays a significant role in shaping students' mental readiness in facing the industrial world. The analysis shows that the majority of students fall into the high mental readiness category, while character education is predominantly at moderate to high levels. The discussion of the findings indicates that economic status functions as a contextual factor influencing the dynamics of the relationship between character education and mental readiness. Students from middle and high economic backgrounds tend to demonstrate more stable mental readiness compared to those from lower economic backgrounds. This finding reinforces the view that mental readiness is influenced not only by cognitive aspects but also by the internalization of character values and environmental support. Accordingly, this study makes an important contribution to understanding students' readiness to face the increasingly complex demands of the world of work.

This study has several strengths that enhance the validity of its findings, including a relatively large number of respondents and the use of structured instruments that systematically measure two main constructs. Data analysis involving classification based on economic status provides a more contextualized picture compared to more general studies. However, this study also has limitations, particularly its descriptive-correlational design, which does not allow for in-depth explanation of causal relationships. The use of self-report data through questionnaires may also introduce respondent subjectivity bias. In addition, the study has not yet accommodated other psychosocial factors such as family support, work experience, and organizational environment. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution in terms of generalization.

Based on these findings and limitations, future research is recommended to employ more complex research designs, such as experimental models or mixed methods, to more

comprehensively uncover causal relationships between character education and mental readiness. Future studies are also encouraged to include additional moderator and mediator variables, such as achievement motivation, self-efficacy, and social support. The development of more diverse measurement instruments through a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and observations should be considered to enhance data depth. Furthermore, expanding research subjects across institutions and cultural contexts is expected to improve the external validity of the findings. Thus, future research outcomes are expected not only to strengthen empirical evidence but also to provide broader practical implications for curriculum development and career guidance services in higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and the Faculty of Forestry for granting permission, support, and access during the data collection process of this study. Such institutional support played a crucial role in the smooth implementation of the research, particularly in reaching respondents and obtaining data relevant to the research objectives.

The authors also extend their appreciation to all students from both faculties who participated as respondents and willingly devoted their time to completing the research instruments. The active participation of the respondents contributed significantly to the quality and validity of the research data. Appreciation is also extended to all parties who provided moral and academic support throughout the research process, either directly or indirectly.

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