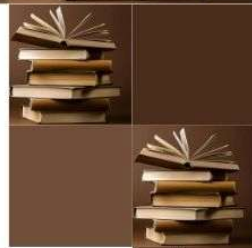
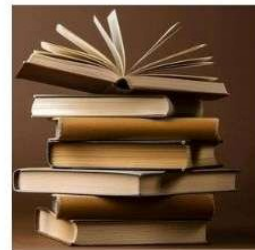


GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

FIRST EDITION
2026

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DANIEL JAMES



ASDF UK

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**GPIR 2026
FIRST EDITION 2026**

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FIRST EDITION GPIR 2026

By
ASDF, UK

Financially Sponsored By
Association of Scientists, Developers and Faculties, India

Editor-in-Chief
Daniel James

Editors:
Anbuoli Parthasarathy and Katsuo Shichirou

Published by
Association of Scientists, Developers and Faculties
Address: 483 Green Lanes, London N13 4BS. England. United Kingdom.
Email: admin@asdf.res.in || www.asdf.international

Global Perspectives in Interdisciplinary Research 2026 (GPIR 2026)

First Edition

Editor-in-Chief: Daniel James
Editors: Anbuoli Parthasarathy and Katsuo Shichirou
Cover Design: ArishKannan B

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ISBN-13: 978-93-88122-15-3

ISBN-10: 93-88122-15-1

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A Study on Career Self-Efficacy and Industry Readiness Among Generation Z Graduates: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The transition from higher education to employment has become increasingly complex for Generation Z graduates due to technological disruption, skills-based hiring practices, and changing employer expectations. Career self-efficacy, defined as an individual's confidence in performing career-related tasks, is considered a key determinant of employability and workplace readiness. This study investigates the relationship between career self-efficacy and industry readiness among Generation Z graduates.

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were collected from 320 graduates aged 21–27 years using standardized scales measuring career self-efficacy and industry readiness. Reliability, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were conducted using SPSS.

Results revealed a significant positive relationship between career self-efficacy and industry readiness ($r = .681, p < .001$). Regression analysis indicated that career self-efficacy significantly predicts industry readiness ($\beta = .596, p < .001$), accounting for 46.4% of the variance. The findings suggest that graduates with stronger confidence in their career-related abilities exhibit higher levels of workplace preparedness.

Keywords: *Career Self-Efficacy, Industry Readiness, Generation Z, Employability, Career Readiness, Graduate Employability*

1. Introduction

The employability of university graduates has become a major concern among educational institutions and employers worldwide. Although Generation Z graduates possess strong technological competencies, employers continue to report deficiencies in communication, professionalism, critical thinking, and workplace adaptability.

Recent employer surveys indicate that more than 70% of employers believe graduates are somewhat prepared for employment, while slightly more than 20% consider them very well prepared. Employers identify communication, teamwork, professionalism, and critical thinking as the most important career readiness competencies.

At the same time, employability studies report that many graduates feel insufficiently prepared for entry-level positions, reflecting a continuing gap between higher education outcomes and industry expectations. Nearly half of surveyed graduates reported feeling unprepared to apply for entry-level jobs, with job-specific skills identified as the largest deficiency.

Career self-efficacy, derived from Social Cognitive Career Theory, may explain differences in graduates' readiness for employment. Individuals who possess higher self-efficacy generally demonstrate greater confidence, persistence, adaptability, and career planning behaviors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Career Self-Efficacy

Career self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks associated with career development, job searching, decision-making, and professional growth.

According to Social Cognitive Career Theory, self-efficacy influences career interests, choices, and performance outcomes.

2.2 Industry Readiness

Industry readiness refers to the possession of competencies required for successful workplace entry and performance.

The most widely recognized framework identifies eight dimensions of career readiness:

- Career and Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity and Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

These competencies are increasingly used by employers to evaluate graduate preparedness.

2.3 Generation Z and Employability

Generation Z is characterized by strong digital literacy, entrepreneurial orientation, and adaptability to technological change. However, research suggests that employers continue to perceive gaps in soft skills and workplace professionalism.

2.4 Research Gap

Although several studies have examined employability and career readiness, limited research has specifically explored how career self-efficacy influences industry readiness among Generation Z graduates.

3. Research Objectives

1. To assess the level of career self-efficacy among Generation Z graduates.
2. To examine the level of industry readiness among Generation Z graduates.
3. To determine the relationship between career self-efficacy and industry readiness.
4. To identify whether career self-efficacy significantly predicts industry readiness.

4. Hypotheses

H1: Career self-efficacy is positively related to industry readiness.

H2: Career self-efficacy significantly predicts industry readiness.

5. Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative descriptive and correlational research design.

Sample

Total Respondents (N = 320)

Age Range: 21–27 years

Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling

Demographic Profile

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	158	49.4
Female	162	50.6
Undergraduate	244	76.3
Postgraduate	76	23.7

Instrument

Career Self-Efficacy Scale (10 Items)

Industry Readiness Scale (12 Items)

Five-point Likert Scale

1 = Strongly Disagree

5 = Strongly Agree

Result

Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Career Self-Efficacy	.892
Industry Readiness	.915

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Career Self-Efficacy	3.94	0.68
Industry Readiness	3.87	0.71

Correlation Analysis

Variables	r	p
Career Self-Efficacy and Industry Readiness	.681	.000

Interpretation:

A strong positive relationship exists between career self-efficacy and industry readiness.

Regression Analysis**Dependent Variable: Industry Readiness**

Predictor	β	t	p
Career Self-Efficacy	.596	15.42	.000

Model Summary

$R = .681$

$R^2 = .464$

Adjusted $R^2 = .462$

$F = 237.77$

$p < .001$

Interpretation:

Career self-efficacy explains 46.4% of the variation in industry readiness.

6. Discussion

The findings indicate that graduates with higher levels of career self-efficacy demonstrate greater readiness for industry demands. This supports Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasizes the role of confidence and self-belief in shaping career behaviors.

The findings also align with employer surveys showing that workplace readiness increasingly depends on communication, professionalism, teamwork, and career management competencies. Employers generally perceive graduates as reasonably prepared but identify significant opportunities for improvement in soft skills and professional behavior.

The results suggest that career development programs, internships, mentoring initiatives, and experiential learning opportunities can strengthen both self-efficacy and industry readiness.

CONCLUSION

Career self-efficacy is a significant predictor of industry readiness among Generation Z graduates. Strengthening students' confidence in their professional abilities may enhance workplace preparedness and improve employability outcomes.

Practical Implications

- Universities should integrate employability training within curricula.

- Industry-academia partnerships should be expanded.
- Career counseling programs should emphasize self-efficacy development.
- Internship opportunities should be made mandatory where possible.

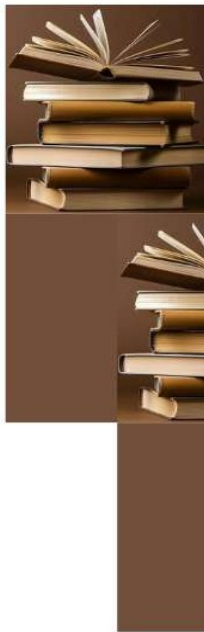
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*This article is prepared exclusively for **Global Perspectives in Interdisciplinary Research 2026** (ISBN: 978-93-88122-15-3) which is published by ASDF International, registered in London, United Kingdom under the directions of the Editor-in-Chief Dr Daniel James and others of the Editorial Team. Permission to make digital or hard copies of part or all of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage, and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the owner/author(s). Copyright Holder can be reached at copy@asdf.international for distribution.*

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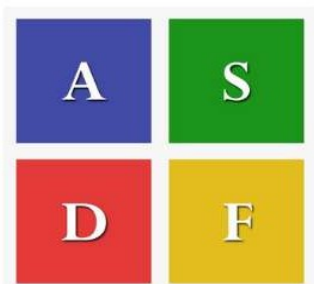


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ISBN 978-93-88122-15-3

