

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Rapid transformations in the global labour market and the growing complexity of social life have made non-technical competencies, or soft skills, a key determinant of university graduates' capacity to secure employment and contribute meaningfully to society. Regarding the Fourth Industrial Revolution, competencies such as collaboration, leadership, creativity, and communication have become increasingly important, extending well beyond technical expertise alone (Zahidi, 2023). Data from the Labour Force Situation in Indonesia 2022 show that recent graduates in Indonesia still face significant obstacles when entering the job market, particularly regarding skill readiness and professional competencies. (Labor Force Situation in Indonesia, 2022).

In response to these developments, volunteering has emerged as a strategic means of supporting Students' personal and professional growth in higher education institutions in Indonesia and abroad. Students participate not only in individual social initiatives but also through campus organisations, community engagement programmes, and wider civic activities. Volunteering provides students with contextual, experiential learning opportunities, enabling them to engage directly with real social dynamics while developing relevant life skills (Llenares & Deocarís, 2019; Mustafa et al., 2020). It also serves as a bridge between employability development and social awareness, both of which are essential for preparing graduates who are globally competitive yet locally responsive.

Theoretically, this study contributes to scholarship on experiential learning, character education, and personality development through socially engaged activity. Volunteering should be understood not merely as a philanthropic practice, but as a process through which values are transformed and internalised. Practically, it aligns with national policy initiatives such as Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), which encourages students to learn beyond the classroom through direct experience in society. Participation in volunteering has been shown to strengthen

employability-related competencies, including time management, work ethics, and interpersonal skills required in professional settings (Gryzenkova et al., 2023; Ovcharova et al., 2022).

Furthermore, social media and digital technologies have transformed how students engage in volunteer programs. Students may find, share, and consider social interaction possibilities more quickly and thoroughly thanks to platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. This breakthrough opens up new avenues for studying the role of media in moderating the impact of social engagement on students' personal development (Killian et al., 2019).

Recent studies have consistently demonstrated the positive contribution of volunteering to students' skills development. Students who actively participate in volunteering report substantial improvements in communication, professionalism, and ethical responsibility (Llenares & Deocarís, 2019). Similar findings indicate that volunteering experiences significantly enhance students' creativity, collaboration, and flexibility (Gryzenkova et al., 2023).

Students who volunteer typically exhibit better levels of self-confidence, future orientation, and job readiness than those who do not engage in such activities (Ovcharova et al., 2022). Beyond cognitive and affective development, students also emphasise the value of social contribution, noting that volunteering encourages sustained involvement in community activities as a form of continuing social responsibility (Mustafa et al., 2020).

In this situation, social media is essential since it links students to volunteer opportunities. Its use accelerates access to information, strengthens digital solidarity, and broadens students' awareness of social issues (Killian et al., 2019). Social media may both facilitate communication and moderate the impact of volunteer activities on students' personal development.

Despite the important contributions of existing studies, the academic literature has not yet examined in a sufficiently specific and comprehensive manner the relationship between students' participation in volunteering and three key dimensions simultaneously: soft skills development, job readiness, and social contribution. Previous research has tended to focus on these dimensions separately,

particularly soft skills or employability alone (Otermans et al., 2024; Villegas, 2024). Limited research has been conducted on the role of social media in modulating the connection, even though students' activities and interactions are now strongly shaped by digital environments (Benson et al., 2014).

B. Research Questions

On the basis of the research background, Volunteering provides valuable learning opportunities for university students outside of the classroom. Through participation in volunteering activities, students do not merely engage in social action; they also gain opportunities to develop soft skills, strengthen their job readiness, and cultivate a sustained commitment to social contribution.

The growing influence of social media has also shaped the ways in which volunteering experiences affect students. Social media may enable students to build personal branding, expand their networks, and share their social engagement experiences with wider audiences. In this context, Social media is thought to have an impact on how students' soft skills, preparedness for the workforce, and social contribution relate to volunteering. This role may involve strengthening these relationships, although it may also prove to have no statistically significant moderating effect.

In light of the statement above, this study addresses the following research topics:

1. Does the development of students' soft skills significantly benefit from their involvement in voluntary work?
2. Does students' participation in volunteering activities enhance their job readiness?
3. Does participation in volunteering activities encourage students to make sustained social contributions?
4. Is social media a moderator in the link between volunteering and soft skill development among students?
5. How does social media affect students' employment preparation after volunteering?

6. How does social media impact the link between volunteering and student social contribution?

C. Research Objectives

This research aims to elucidate the multifaceted impact of student engagement in volunteerism on their socio-personal and professional advancement. Specifically, the study delineates how voluntary involvement fosters soft skill acquisition, augments career readiness, and cultivates enduring civic engagement. Furthermore, it evaluates the potential moderating influence of social media platforms in either amplifying or attenuating these outcomes.

To achieve these overarching aims, the specific empirical objectives are formulated as follows:

1. To ascertain the direct impact of student volunteerism on the cultivation of interpersonal and soft skills.
2. To gauge the extent to which active participation in voluntary initiatives enhances students' prospective employment readiness.
3. To investigate the long-term effects of voluntary experiences on students' subsequent propensity for social contribution.
4. To critically analyze whether social media usage moderates either strengthens or dampens the relationship between volunteer engagement and soft skill proficiency.
5. To assess the moderating capacity of social media on the nexus between voluntary participation and career preparedness.
6. To explore the degree to which social media dynamics moderate the association between volunteerism and sustained civic contribution.

D. Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significance

It is anticipated that this research will advance human resource management expertise, especially with regard to students' development of soft skills, job readiness, and social contribution via volunteer work activities. Additionally, it

aims to enhance scholarly conversations about the connection between volunteering and personal readiness for the workforce, as well as the function of volunteering in promoting long-term social consciousness and accountability.

2. Practical Significance

In practical terms, the outcomes of this study can serve as a reference for higher education institutions to develop campus policies and design digitally supported community engagement programmes. Universities and social organisations may also use social media strategically to recruit, motivate, and monitor students' involvement in volunteering. Such efforts can support the development of graduates who are not only prepared for employment but also capable of contributing actively to social development.