English Education Alumni's Perceptions of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness (SHC) in the Workplace: A Study at Jambi University

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Abstract

Graduate employability increasingly depends on both discipline-specific knowledge and transferable competencies needed to remain competitive in changing workplace environments. However, limited research has examined how English Education alumni perceive the importance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness (SHC) and how Soft Skills and Hard Skills contribute to Competitiveness based on workplace experience. This research aimed to identify the perceived importance of the three SHC components and examine the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness. A quantitative survey involved 205 alumni of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Jambi with at least six months of work experience. Data were collected using a 64-item questionnaire adapted from the SHC framework and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. All three SHC components were perceived as important, with Competitiveness receiving the highest mean score (M = 4.320), followed by Soft Skills (M = 4.285) and Hard Skills (M = 4.190). The regression model was statistically significant and explained 55.9% of the variance in Competitiveness ($R^2 = 0.559$, $p < .001$). Soft Skills showed the strongest positive contribution ($\beta = 0.758$, $p < .001$), whereas Hard Skills showed a small negative partial contribution ($\beta = -0.106$, $p = .026$). These findings indicate that both competency dimensions are relevant, although Soft Skills make a stronger unique contribution to Competitiveness. The research highlights the importance of integrating technical and transferable competencies in preparing English Education graduates for diverse professional contexts.

Keywords: *competitiveness, English Education alumni, hard skills, soft skills, workplace competencies*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to equip their graduates with competencies that go beyond subject-specific knowledge. This expectation has become increasingly important as technological changes, evolving work practices, and shifting workplace demands continue to transform the competencies required in the workplace (Vlachopoulos and Pachni Tsitiridou, 2026; Tee et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, graduate employability remains an important concern for higher education institutions as graduates navigate the transition from education to the workplace. Saraswati and Lambert (2023) examined perceived employability among students and alumni of an Indonesian higher education institution, highlighting the importance of understanding factors associated with graduates' perceptions of their employability. Similarly, Isbah et al. (2023) discussed strategies for strengthening graduate employability in Indonesia, emphasizing the need for higher education institutions to respond to changing workplace conditions. These changes indicate that graduates need a combination of technical knowledge and

transferable competencies to remain relevant in changing professional environments. Supporting this perspective, Aprilita and Pritasari (2023) found significant positive relationships between perceived work readiness and five soft skills among recent graduates of Indonesian public universities: communication, time management, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. These findings underscore the importance of developing both technical and transferable competencies in higher education to better align graduate preparation with workplace demands.

Tushar and Sooraksa (2023) identified problem-solving, communication, teamwork, adaptability, and willingness to learn as recurrent employability skills across different time periods and highlighted the continuing mismatch between workplace expectations and graduates' competencies. García-Álvarez et al. (2022) similarly emphasized the importance of cross-disciplinary competencies from employers' perspectives while highlighting the need for clearer classifications of the competencies required of university graduates. Succi and Canovi (2020) also found that soft skills have become increasingly important for graduate employability, particularly in enabling graduates to respond to changing workplace demands. a finding further supported by more recent evidence on the role of soft skills in graduate employability (Mohd Basir et al., 2022). Taken together, these findings demonstrate that graduate preparation cannot rely solely on specialist knowledge and that higher education institutions need clearer evidence of how graduates perceive the relevance of technical and transferable competencies in actual workplace settings. This issue is particularly important for English Education graduates, whose career pathways may extend beyond teaching and require different combinations of technical and transferable competencies. Therefore, examining alumni perceptions based on their workplace experiences is necessary to understand which competencies they consider important for navigating diverse professional contexts.

This expectation is particularly relevant for English Education graduates because their career opportunities are not necessarily limited to teaching (Dari et al., 2024). Although teaching remains a major career pathway, graduates may also pursue careers in administration, adult education, communication, the service sector, and other professional fields. Rizqi et al. (2024), for example, examined graduates of English teacher education programs who pursued careers outside teaching and identified various skills and competencies that they perceived as useful in their current jobs. These findings illustrate the diversity of career pathways available to English Education graduates and indicate the importance of competencies that extend beyond direct classroom application (Nabilah et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding graduates' perceptions of workplace competencies is important for identifying the skills they consider relevant to their professional responsibilities.

One framework that can be used to examine such competencies is the Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness (SHC) framework developed by Hadiyanto et al. (2017). The framework consists of three interrelated components: Soft Skills, which refer to transferable abilities supporting interaction, learning, adaptation, problem-solving, and teamwork; Hard Skills, which refer to technical knowledge and practical abilities required to perform specific tasks; and Competitiveness, which encompasses Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Lifelong Learning. Hadiyanto et al. (2017) developed an assessment tool for these competencies, while Hadiyanto et al. (2021) further proposed their integration into Indonesian higher education curricula. These studies established SHC as a useful framework for assessing and developing graduate competencies, but they focused mainly on framework development and curriculum integration rather than on graduates' workplace-based perceptions.

Hadiyanto et al. (2022) extended SHC research into workplace settings by examining graduates from different occupational and disciplinary backgrounds. Their research showed the relevance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness in

professional contexts, but it did not specifically focus on English Education alumni or examine how Soft Skills and Hard Skills contribute to Competitiveness. Related research in Indonesia has also examined the role of Soft Skills and Hard Skills in employment readiness, although within a different population and without integrating Competitiveness as part of the SHC framework (Ananda et al., 2023). Broader employability studies have also emphasized the importance of communication, adaptability, teamwork, problem-solving, and other transferable skills (Bediya-Guerrero et al., 2024; García-Álvarez et al., 2022; Succi & Canovi, 2020; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023), while Rizqi et al. (2024) examined competencies considered useful by English teacher education graduates pursuing non-teaching careers. However, these studies did not examine the three SHC components together within the specific context of English Education alumni. Therefore, two gaps remain: limited evidence on how English Education alumni perceive the importance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness based on their workplace experiences, and limited evidence on the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to their Competitiveness.

Taken together, the previous studies show that SHC research has progressed from the development of competency assessment frameworks to curriculum integration and the examination of graduate competencies in workplace settings. However, these studies have largely addressed graduates across broader disciplinary and occupational contexts, while employability research has mainly emphasized transferable competencies or employers' expectations (Amarathunga et al., 2024). Although research on English teacher education graduates has begun to explore competencies used beyond teaching (Nabilah et al., 2025; Rizqi et al., 2024), it has not specifically examined Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness as an integrated framework based on alumni workplace experiences. In addition, the studies reviewed here have not sufficiently investigated how Soft Skills and Hard Skills contribute to Competitiveness among English Education alumni. Therefore, the present research extends previous research by examining both the perceived importance of the three SHC components and the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness within the specific context of English Education alumni working across diverse professional fields.

Based on the gaps identified in previous studies, the novelty of this research lies in examining the SHC framework specifically from the workplace perspectives of English Education alumni at Universitas Jambi. Unlike previous studies that have primarily focused on SHC framework development, curriculum integration, broader graduate competency performance, or general employability, this research combines two aspects within a single investigation: alumni perceptions of the importance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness and the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness. Accordingly, this research aims to identify the perceived importance of the three SHC components among English Education alumni based on their workplace experiences and to examine the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to their Competitiveness. To address these objectives, the research is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do English Education alumni perceive the importance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness based on their workplace experiences? and (2) To what extent do Soft Skills and Hard Skills contribute to the Competitiveness of English Education alumni? The findings are expected to provide context-specific evidence on the workplace competencies considered important by English Education alumni and to inform discussions on curriculum relevance and graduate preparation for diverse professional contexts.

METHOD

Design

This research used a quantitative descriptive survey design to examine the perceptions of English Language Education alumni regarding the importance of soft skills, hard skills, and competitiveness (SHC) in the workplace. Creswell (2018) explain that a quantitative

approach is used to measure variables through numerical data and analyze them systematically. In the context of this research, a survey was chosen to obtain structured information from alumni regarding the level of importance of various skills needed in the workplace.

A quantitative descriptive design was deemed appropriate because this research aimed to describe alumni perceptions numerically and identify the SHC components that received the highest importance ratings. In line with this approach, Hadiyanto et al. (2021) used a quantitative survey and descriptive analysis in developing an SHC model for Indonesian higher education. Therefore, this research employed a quantitative design that combined descriptive analysis and multiple linear regression. Descriptive analysis was used to identify alumni perceptions of the importance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness, while multiple linear regression was used to examine the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness.

Respondents

This research population consisted of 665 alumni of the English Language Education Study Program at the University of Jambi who graduated between 2018 and 2024. Population data were obtained from the University of Jambi Dashboard. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion criteria. According to Etikan et al. (2016), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that allows researchers to select participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. This technique was used because the research required alumni with work experience who could provide assessments based on that experience.

The inclusion criteria for this research included: (1) graduates of the English Language Education Study Program at the University of Jambi; (2) graduation between 2019 and 2024; (3) having at least six months of work experience, either in a position directly related or unrelated to English Language Education; and (4) willingness to participate by completing the research questionnaire. The target sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, with a population of 661 alumni and an assumed margin of error of 5%. Based on this calculation, the target sample size was rounded up to 250 respondents.

Although the target sample size was 250 respondents, a total of 205 eligible and complete responses were retained for the final analysis. The target sample calculation was used as a basis for sample size planning; however, because this research employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique, the final sample cannot be considered statistically representative of the entire population (Etikan et al., 2016). Therefore, the research findings are interpreted based on the characteristics of the participating respondents rather than generalized to all alumni.

Instruments

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire adapted from the Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness (SHC) framework developed by Hadiyanto et al. (2017, 2021). Hadiyanto et al. (2017) developed a rubric for assessing student and graduate skills that encompassed three main components: soft skills, hard skills, and competitiveness. This framework was then used as a basis for assessing relevant skills for higher education graduates (Hadiyanto et al., 2021).

In this research, the instrument was used to measure the perceptions of English Language Education alumni regarding the importance of skills related to job demands. The questionnaire consisted of 64 items grouped into three dimensions: 37 soft skills, 7 hard skills, and 20 competitiveness. The soft skills dimension encompasses communication skills, digital information technology skills, numeracy, learning and adaptability, problem-solving and teamwork. The hard skills dimension relates to the technical knowledge and

practical abilities required to perform specific tasks. Meanwhile, the competitiveness dimension encompasses employability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning, in accordance with the indicators used in the adapted SHC instrument.

Each item was assessed using a five-point response scale: 1 = Not Important at All, 2 = Not Important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very Important. This scale was used to record respondents' assessments of the importance of each skill. For data processing, higher scores indicated higher ratings on the response scale. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms. The use of a structured questionnaire allowed for the collection of consistent responses from all participants, allowing for quantitative summary of the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collecting Technique

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire was adapted from the Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness (SHC) framework developed by Hadiyanto et al. (2017, 2021). It consisted of 64 items, comprising 37 soft skills items, seven hard skills items, and 20 competitiveness items. The questionnaire aimed to describe alumni's perceptions of the importance of these competencies in the workplace.

The questionnaire used a five-point response scale: 1 = Not Important at All, 2 = Not Important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very Important. The questionnaire link was distributed to eligible alumni through WhatsApp and other available digital communication channels. The participants were graduates of the English Education Research Program at Universitas Jambi who completed their studies between 2019 and 2024 and had at least six months of work experience. Participation was voluntary, and only completed responses from eligible participants were included in the analysis. the target sample size was 250 respondents. However, 205 eligible and complete responses were included in the final analysis.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis included validity testing, reliability testing, descriptive statistics, and multiple linear regression analysis. Instrument validity was assessed using Pearson item-total correlations. The results showed that all 64 questionnaire items met the validity criterion and were retained for further analysis. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of ≥ 0.70 considered acceptable for internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were 0.923 for Soft Skills, 0.829 for Hard Skills, and 0.863 for Competitiveness, indicating satisfactory internal consistency across the three SHC components.

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, minimum scores, and maximum scores, were used to summarize the alumni's responses to the questionnaire. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of responses, while means and standard deviations were used to describe the perceived importance and variation in respondents' ratings of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness. To address the first research objective and determine which SHC component received the highest perceived importance rating, the mean scores of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness were compared. Because the three components contained different numbers of items, the comparison was based on the average item score for each component rather than the total raw score. Descriptive statistics for the Soft Skills and Competitiveness indicators were also examined to provide a more detailed description of alumni perceptions of the respective SHC components.

To address the second research objective, multiple linear regression analysis was

conducted to examine the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness. Model fit was evaluated using R, R^2, the F-test, and significance values, while the individual contribution of each predictor was examined using unstandardized regression coefficients, standardized beta coefficients, t-values, and p-values. Statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

This research involved 205 alumni of the English Language Education Study program at Jambi University who met the research criteria and had work experience. Respondent characteristics described included gender, age, GPA, workplace category, and monthly income. A summary of respondent characteristics is presented in Table 1

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequence	Persentage
Gender	Male	48	23,4 %
	Female	157	76,6 %
Age	≤ 23	36	17.6 %
	24-26	116	56.6 %
	27-29	53	25.9 %
GPA	3,00 – 3,25	8	3.9 %
	3.26 - 3.50	50	24.4 %
	3.51 - 3.75	70	34.1 %
	3.76 - 4.00	77	37.6 %
Job/Profession	Gevernment	43	21 %
	Enterprises	60	29.3 %
	Freelance Workplace	63	30.7 %
	Private Schools and Course	39	19 %
Month Salary	Below 1 milion	51	24.9 %
	1.0 - 2.0 milion	70	34.1 %
	2.1 - 3.0 milion	61	29.8 %
	Above - 3.0 million	23	11.2 %

Respondents were predominantly female, with most of them in the 24–26 age range, with an average age of 25.21. The majority of respondents had a GPA above 3.50, with an average GPA of 3.65. In terms of employment, respondents were spread across several fields, with the largest proportion working as freelancers and in companies, while others worked in government agencies, private schools, and training institutions. This distribution indicates that participating alumni came from diverse professional backgrounds in assessing the importance of SHC competencies in the workplace.

Statistic Descriptive

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of SHC Components

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Softskills	3,95	4,95	4,28	0,240
Hardskills	3,00	5.,00	4,19	0,436
Competitiveness	3,75	5,00	4,31	0,271

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to provide an overview of the general trends and variations in alumni assessments of the three main components of the SHC: Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness. Because the three components have different numbers of items, comparisons between components were made using the average score per item, rather than the total score. Thus, all components were compared on the same scale, namely 1 to 5, so that a higher average score indicates a higher level of importance based on alumni perceptions.

For the Competitiveness component, the average score was 4.320 on a maximum scale of 5, with respondents' scores ranging from 3.75 to 5.00. The standard deviation of 0.272 indicates that alumni's assessment of the importance of Competitiveness is relatively concentrated around the average score. Based on the interpretation criteria used, this score falls into the very high category.

The Soft Skills component obtained an average score of 4.285 on a maximum scale of 5, with a score range of 3.95 – 4.95 and a standard deviation of 0.240. This score is also included in the very high category. Meanwhile, Hard Skills obtained an average score of 4.190, with a minimum score of 3.00 and a maximum of 5.00. The standard deviation of 0.436 indicates a greater variation in assessments than the other two components. Based on the interpretation criteria, Hard Skills is included in the high category.

Overall, all three SHC components received high importance ratings from alumni. Competitiveness had the highest average score, followed by Soft Skills and Hard Skills. However, the mean differences between components were relatively small, indicating that alumni generally considered all three SHC components to be important competencies in their work contexts

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Soft Skills Indicators

Indicator	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication	26,00	35,00	30,17	2,15
Digital/IT	19,00	25,00	21,72	1,58
Numeracy	22,00	30,00	25,29	1,87
Learning and Adaptability	27,00	35,00	29,84	2,26
Problem Solving	21,00	30,00	25,70	1,99
Teamwork	22,00	30,00	25,82	1,91

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the six Soft Skills indicators assessed by alumni based on their workplace experiences. The statistics shown include the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation scores for each indicator. Because each indicator consists of a different number of items, the theoretical scoring range also varies from indicator to indicator. Therefore, the total scores in this table are used to illustrate the scoring patterns for each indicator, not to directly compare which indicator has the highest level of importance.

In general, the scores obtained for all indicators were relatively close to the upper limit of their respective scoring ranges. This pattern indicates that respondents tended to rate various aspects of Soft Skills measured in the research highly, including communication skills, digital and information technology skills, numeracy, learning and adaptability, problem-solving, and teamwork. In other words, no single Soft Skills aspect showed a tendency to be rated low based on the respondents' scores.

The distribution of scores across the six indicators also shows that assessments across respondents are relatively concentrated in the high range. These descriptive findings suggest that alumni view various aspects of soft skills as relevant and important competencies in their work experience. While there was variation in scores across each indicator, the overall response pattern demonstrates a consistent trend toward the importance of soft skills in the workplace.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Competitiveness Indicators

Indicator	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employability	21,00	30,00	25,35	2,06
Entrepreneurship	25,00	35,00	30,32	2,68
Lifelong Learning	25,00	35,00	30,71	2,37

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for three Competitiveness indicators: Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Lifelong Learning. These three indicators are

measured using a different number of items, so their theoretical score ranges are also not the same. Therefore, the total scores in the table are used to illustrate the tendency of alumni responses to each indicator, not to directly compare scores between indicators.

In general, respondents' scores for all three indicators were at the upper end of their respective ranges. This pattern indicates that alumni tend to place high values on employability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning based on their workplace experiences. Thus, these three aspects appear to be a crucial component of alumni's perceived competitiveness.

The distribution of scores also shows that respondents' assessments are relatively concentrated in the high range. While there was variation in responses among alumni, there was no apparent trend toward low scores on any of the three indicators. Overall, these results demonstrate that competitiveness is consistently viewed as an important aspect within the context of alumni work experience.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5. Model Summary of Soft Skills and Hard Skills on Competitiveness

			Overall Model Test			
Model	**R**	**R^2**	**F**	**df1**	**df2**	**p**
1	0,748	0,559	128,264	2	202	< 0.001

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between soft skills and hard skills and the competitiveness of English Language Education alumni. The analysis results showed an R value of 0,748, indicating a strong overall relationship between the two predictor variables and competitiveness.

The model yielded an R^2 value of 0,559, indicating that Soft Skills and Hard Skills together were able to explain approximately 55,9% of the variation in alumni Competitiveness. Meanwhile, the portion of variation not explained by this model was related to other factors not included in the analysis. The model testing results also showed that the overall regression model was statistically significant, with F (2, 202) = 128,264 and a p-value < 0,001. Thus, Soft Skills and Hard Skills simultaneously had a significant relationship with alumni Competitiveness.

ANOVA Test

Table 5. ANOVA Test

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**p**
Regression	3375,222	2	1687,611	128.264	< 0.001
Residual	2657,773	202	13,157		
Total	6032,995	204			

The ANOVA test results show that the regression model that examines the relationship between Soft Skills and Hard Skills with Competitiveness is statistically significant, with an F value of 128.264 and a p-value <0.001. These results indicate that the model that includes Soft Skills and Hard Skills together is able to explain variations in Competitiveness significantly compared to the model without predictors.

Therefore, the ANOVA results support the previous Model Fit Measures findings that simultaneously, soft skills and hard skills have a significant relationship with alumni competitiveness. However, the ANOVA results do not yet show the relationship between each predictor individually. Therefore, the partial contribution of soft skills and hard skills to competitiveness is further examined through the Model Coefficients results.

Model Coefficients

Table 7. Model Coefficients of Soft Skills and Hard Skills with Competitiveness

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Intercept	18,885	4,835	3,906	< ,001	
Soft Skills	0,461	0,029	16,013	< ,001	0,758
Hard Skills	-0,189	0,084	-2,238	0,026	-0,106

The results of the regression analysis show that Soft Skills have a positive and significant effect on alumni Competitiveness. The regression coefficient of 0.461 with a t value of 16.013 and $p < 0.001$ indicates that an increase in Soft Skills scores is followed by an increase in Competitiveness scores when Hard Skills are controlled in the model. The standardized coefficient value ($\beta = 0.758$) indicates that Soft Skills have a strong contribution in explaining Competitiveness.

Meanwhile, Hard Skills showed a negative and statistically significant effect on Competitiveness when Soft Skills were controlled, with a regression coefficient of -0.189, t-value = -2.238, and $p = 0.026$. The standardized coefficient value ($\beta = -0.106$) indicates that the contribution of Hard Skills in the model is relatively smaller than Soft Skills. However, the negative direction of the coefficient indicates a partial influence of Hard Skills after Soft Skills are taken into account in the model.

Overall, the regression coefficient results show that Soft Skills and Hard Skills both contribute significantly to Competitiveness, but Soft Skills are a much more dominant predictor based on the standardized beta coefficient value.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to identify English Education alumni's perceptions of the importance of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness (SHC) based on their workplace experiences and to examine the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness. The results showed that all three SHC components were perceived as important, with Competitiveness obtaining the highest mean score, followed by Soft Skills and Hard Skills. Although their mean scores differed, the differences were relatively small. This indicates that alumni viewed all three components as relevant to meeting workplace demands.

The finding that Competitiveness obtained the highest mean score indicates that alumni placed strong emphasis on maintaining relevance and readiness in professional environments. Within the SHC framework, Competitiveness encompasses Employability, Entrepreneurship, and Lifelong Learning (Hadiyanto et al., 2017). These aspects reflect graduates' capacity to remain employable, develop professional opportunities, and continuously update their knowledge and skills. The high scores across these indicators reinforce the importance alumni placed on Competitiveness in their professional preparedness. The high perception of Competitiveness may also relate to the diverse occupational backgrounds of the respondents. Alumni work not only in fields directly related to English Education but also in companies, government agencies, freelance work, private schools, and training institutions. Such diversity requires graduates to respond to different workplace demands and apply their competencies across various professional settings. Rizqi et al. (2024) similarly found that graduates of English teacher education programs working outside teaching applied a range of competencies in their jobs.

Soft Skills were also rated highly by the alumni. The six dimensions measured-communication, digital/IT skills, numeracy, learning and adaptability, problem-solving, and teamwork-generally received high scores. This finding is consistent with Tushar and Sooraksa (2023), who identified problem-solving, communication, teamwork, adaptability, and willingness to learn as competencies related to employability. García-Álvarez et al.

(2022) also emphasized the importance of cross-disciplinary competencies from employers' perspectives. These findings suggest that graduate preparedness depends on both technical knowledge and transferable competencies.

The regression results further strengthen this interpretation. Soft Skills and Hard Skills jointly explained 55.9% of the variance in alumni Competitiveness, and the overall model was statistically significant. Mwita et al. (2024) similarly found that both soft skills and technical skills were associated with perceived graduate employability. These results highlight the importance of considering transferable and technical competencies together, although their relative contributions may differ across contexts. The remaining 44.1% of variance was not accounted for by the present model, suggesting that other factors may also be associated with Competitiveness. Individually, Soft Skills showed the strongest positive contribution to Competitiveness, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.758. This indicates that higher Soft Skills scores were strongly associated with higher Competitiveness after Hard Skills were controlled for in the model. Pramestie and Prabowo (2025) reported a related pattern, finding that soft skills made a significant positive contribution to students' work readiness, whereas hard skills did not show a significant partial contribution. Although their research focused on work readiness rather than Competitiveness, both findings highlight the important role of transferable competencies.

These results are also consistent with the SHC framework, which positions Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness as interrelated dimensions of graduate competency development. Hadiyanto et al. (2021) emphasized the integration of these components into higher education curricula, learning processes, and evaluation. In the present research, the stronger contribution of Soft Skills suggests that non-technical competencies should be treated as an integral part of graduate preparation rather than merely as supplementary skills.

Meanwhile, Hard Skills showed a small but statistically significant negative coefficient after Soft Skills were controlled for in the regression model. This result should be interpreted cautiously. The negative coefficient does not mean that Hard Skills are unimportant or that higher Hard Skills reduce Competitiveness. Descriptively, Hard Skills were still rated highly by the alumni. The coefficient is therefore better understood as a partial effect that emerged after the contribution shared with Soft Skills was taken into account.

These findings suggest that Hard Skills remain an important foundation of professional competence, while Soft Skills play a stronger role in supporting Competitiveness. Technical competencies, including English language proficiency and profession-specific skills, remain necessary for performing work-related tasks. This interpretation is consistent with Mardiyah and Hayat (2026), who found that soft skills play an important role in graduates' adaptation and workplace readiness, while technical skills remain an essential foundation for meeting professional requirements. However, technical competencies may need to be supported by communication, adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork, and continuous learning in diverse occupational settings. Thus, Soft Skills and Hard Skills should be viewed as complementary rather than competing dimensions.

Overall, the findings support the integrated development of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness within higher education. English Education programs need to prepare graduates for professional contexts that extend beyond teaching. Learning experiences that strengthen communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, digital skills, and lifelong learning may contribute to broader graduate preparedness. This implication is consistent with studies emphasizing the need for higher education to provide stronger opportunities for soft-skill development and alignment with labor-market requirements (Kocsis & Pusztai, 2024; Vezi-Magigaba & Utete, 2024). At the same time, technical and profession-specific competencies should remain an essential part of graduate preparation.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the workplace competencies of English Education alumni involve the integration of Soft Skills, Hard Skills, and Competitiveness rather than technical competence alone. The findings indicate that all three SHC components are considered important in alumni's workplace experiences, while Soft Skills show the stronger contribution to Competitiveness within the regression model. These findings suggest that technical competence remains relevant, but its value in professional contexts should be considered together with transferable competencies that support communication, adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork, and continuous learning.

Theoretically, this research extends the application of the SHC framework to the specific context of English Education alumni by providing evidence on both the perceived importance of its three components and the contribution of Soft Skills and Hard Skills to Competitiveness. The findings reinforce the view that graduate competence is better understood through the integration of technical and transferable competencies rather than through either type of competence alone.

Practically, the research suggests that English Education programs should continue strengthening linguistic and pedagogical competence while also integrating opportunities to develop professional communication, adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork, digital competence, and lifelong learning. Such an integrated approach may better support graduates in preparing for both education-related careers and broader professional contexts.

This research has limitations due to the use of alumni perception data and purposive sampling, so the results cannot be fully generalized to all alumni. Future research could involve a broader sample, consider different occupational groups, and incorporate other factors that may be related to alumni competitiveness.

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