

The Predictive Relationship of Academic Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness among Fresh Graduates: A Basis for Formulating a Work Readiness Program

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Abstract

Past studies show that work readiness is associated with life satisfaction. In the current study, academic life satisfaction, which is a specific domain of life satisfaction, is studied as a predictor of work readiness among newly graduated students. The predictive research design was used to test this relationship. One hundred twenty-five (125) new graduates answered the survey for assessing academic life satisfaction and work readiness. Data was analyzed using regression analysis. Findings show that academic life satisfaction significantly predicted work readiness. These findings mean that the students who were academically satisfied are the ones who gain adequate preparation to enter the workforce, provide better performance in their jobs, and shows more content on their careers. Given the said findings, the study proposed work readiness program to aid fresh or new graduates. More so, educational institutions are recommended to emphasize improving students' academic life satisfaction and well-being by providing suitable practice and employability skills and establishing an enjoyable and safe campus environment.

Keywords: academic life satisfaction, work readiness, fresh graduates, predictive relationship



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INTRODUCTION

Fresh graduates usually face different problems in transitioning from the academic to the work environment. One example would be that of a lack of work experience (Molinsky & Pisman, 2019). With this, it may not be easy to get jobs, especially for fresh graduates. This is because most firms looked for professionals with experience (Compaira, 2022; Acciona, 2019). Another example are fresh graduates with poor interpersonal skills. Lack of interpersonal skills would negatively affect the job-searching efforts of a fresh graduate. Hence, fresh graduates may find themselves in need of improving these skills and enhance their adaptability (Compaira, 2022). Adaptability is another factor that was said to influence work readiness among fresh graduates. The students' culture moving from college to the working world could be a shock, and it may leave fresh graduates feeling homesick and overburdened (Molinsky & Pisman, 2019).

Moreover, fresh graduates often find it challenging, especially during job interviews when they had to prove their ability and see how

they stood among others. Therefore, they are expected to polish their communication skills and specifically gain industry-related skills (Acciona, 2019). In addition to the problem of adjusting to academic demands as well as financial pressures, difficulties in adjusting to the professional world and establishing necessary limits were among the other issues that fresh graduates may need to deal with (Brooks, 2021). Filipino students, are likewise, vulnerable to their financial problems as they had significant influence on their well-being (Bernardo & Resurrection, 2018).

Such challenges may be present, and they could affect the level of happiness, satisfaction, and well-being of young graduates upon their entry into working life. All educational institutions, industry employees, and support systems should recognize and accept this fact of life so that they can provide fresh graduates with the required resources and support to cope with this period.

Many events could affect the life of a fresh graduate. As demonstrated by Majewski (2018), involvement in activities, such as required

coursework, might be associated with higher levels of satisfaction. More importantly, being an active student in extracurricular and intramural activities was positively related to the well-being of undergraduate students.

Academic life satisfaction was a measure of the overall happiness and benefits those students had endured during their academic struggle. A variety of influences, ranging from classroom interactions to learning outcomes, determine whether a student was satisfied with their academic experiences. These included academic success, subjective well-being, healthy lifestyle balance, and strong connections—all of which were important for the fulfillment of one's academic life. Making a difference, improving their academic results, and getting their lives back on track required one to take these matters into consideration.

Students' success and achievements were dependent on their level of satisfaction with their academic environment. Scientific studies had also been conducted on the link between academic life satisfaction and factors like positive academic expectations, self-efficacy, and academic achievements (Antaramian & Lee, 2017; Malik et al., 2013). Also, general happiness, reduction in stress, and eagerness to live were found to be directly proportional to the level of academic satisfaction (Kumar & Dileep, 2006). Academic satisfaction could be said to be related to society because it may lead to the developmental growth of an individual and possibly good health and life achievements. In the same way, academic satisfaction was one of the areas of life satisfaction, among others that included social, self-, physical, and family satisfaction (Malik et al., 2013).

Satisfied students would most likely be able to acquire the necessary skills and essential knowledge for career success. Connected students who felt that their peers and teachers were available for them would feel more appreciated and supported. Such support may increase their resilience and make them feel less affected by stigma or other problems related to mental health issues, and so on.

According to Social Cognitive Career Theory (SSCT), as anchored from Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977), academic satisfaction can facilitate the expansion and nurturance of the career aspirations in children and adolescents (Lent et al., 2000). This can also facilitate career goal setting and its implementation among young adults. Thus, the theory presents the possibility of the acquisition of academic life satisfaction in its influence with work readiness after graduation.



Figure 1
Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Academic Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness

In conclusion, there were several instances that could be of concern to fresh graduates in connection with their satisfaction level. The factors that were under consideration were some types of stress that students experience in the classroom, the level of education they got, and the general condition of their lives. As fresh graduates go through the transition from academic life to professional life, this study will examine and assess the role of their academic life satisfaction to their level of work readiness. Specifically, it intends to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of academic life satisfaction of the fresh graduates?
2. What is the level of work readiness of the fresh graduates?
3. Is there a significant relationship between academic life satisfaction and work readiness?
4. What work readiness program can be proposed as a result of this study?

LITERATURES

Work Readiness. Work readiness was a complex phenomenon, including all the qualities and skills that were needed for efficiency in the workplace. Caballero et al. (2011) defined this as the motivation, maturity,

personal growth and development, organizational awareness, technical focus, interpersonal orientation, attitudes to work, problem-solving, adaptability, and resilience of individuals entering the work force. There was an unusually large body of literature on work readiness, and the qualities that fresh graduates present gave insight into their level of readiness to join the workforce (Schweinsberg et al., 2021). Although the problem of readiness for work for a certain occupation and location was not clearly defined, several studies understood that the problem may appear in different kinds of work and countries (Caballero & Walker, 2010).

Nevertheless, it was demonstrated that readiness for work differed from one country to another (Schweinsberg et al., 2021). The work readiness of students starts as an indication of how long they would stay employed in their current industry. It is understood that when preparing for work, people use cognitive skills such as sharp memory, problem-solving, attentiveness, and decision-making (ACT Education Co, 2013).

In addition to this, students had different transition knowledge and skills, including academic, family, and peer support roles and career opportunities (Malau-Aduli et al., 2022). In one study, there had been a demonstrated correlation between career adaptability, career expertise, success, and the well-being of students (Akkermans et al., 2018). It outlined in detail the aspects that might be related to students' work readiness at the initial stages of their university years and their academic status, including extracurricular activities. It's about the students' ability for work application and preparedness. These findings were related to the fact that the students could be prepared for work as their needs were addressed, hence they were satisfied with their academic lives.

Work Readiness and the Pandemic. The undergraduate students and teachers' functionality during the COVID-19 pandemic had compromised the learning process as schools had either closed or switched to online education. Fresh graduates were the most

frustrated group of people who were not able or had difficulty to secure a job. The economic crisis resulting from the pandemic was very severe. The biggest sign was the highest level of unemployment and the number of people who could not get involved in the market (Rogowska, 2021). While, there were few new types of work arrangements at this time; for example, working from home and hybrid work had their own difficulties, such as work management and communication.

Moreover, the personal, academic, and occupational factors that made a person ready for work are considered complex characteristics. The following factors had been identified as predictors of work readiness: (1) Associated with a set of skills and behaviors including maturity, ability and skills, attitudes, cooperation, initiative, creativity, diligence, responsibility, and social intelligence (Nurlaela et al., 2021; Tentama et al., 2019); (2) Self-efficacy was a strong predictor of work readiness behavior as it helped individuals utilize their skills, emotional and social attributes, and optimize their workability (Tentama et al., 2019); (3) Factors such as academic performance, discipline-specific skills, and personal characteristics also influenced the perceived work readiness of fresh graduates (Goodridge, 2019; Schweinsberg et al., 2021).

Work readiness was something that mattered a lot to students and fresh graduates because it determines their performance in the work environment. Some predictors of work readiness included: maturity, by being mentally mature and emotionally prepared to work in a team; critical, responsible, and motivated; and job-specific skills, which were very crucial in many areas of work. These skills comprised communication, leadership, teamwork, discipline, and creativity (Schweinsberg et al., 2021).

The fact that "work readiness" itself was the most unclear and controversial area of assessment in graduate recruitment processes today might make selection methods most important (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Nevertheless, employers placed more focus on

aspects of work readiness such as communication, a person's motivation, initiative, thinking skills, and social interaction (Caballero & Walker, 2010). These are important concepts believed to still be relevant post-pandemic (Schweinsberg et al., 2021).

Academic Life Satisfaction. Academic life satisfaction pertains to the students' academic achievement as well as their feelings related to academic life (Kumar & Dileep, 2006). It could be further defined as the level of joy, relaxation, and involvement a student had in the process of education (Kumar & Dileep, 2006). The positive mental health of college students was an important motive, as it portrayed complete wellness and happiness (Zalazar-Jaime et al., 2022). In order to deal with academic stress, Filipino students usually looked to spirituality, which was a critical core of their culture (Auztria-Cruz, 2019). However, the academic performance of Filipino university students was to a great extent based on various factors such as styles of learning, study habits, and the ability to manage time. Taking into account and referencing the specific learning styles and study habits should be included in design of the effective instruction for Filipino students (Magulod, 2019).

The research study by Egcas et al. (2021) revealed that a significant number of college students had been reporting very bad mental health states, and they could be problematic or even worse. The three main academic stress sources are: unfair treatment from teachers, completing course requirements, and understanding subject matter. An adverse effect of such may be developing sleeping problems, low self-confidence, or emotional swings among these students (Austria-Cruz, 2019). But such differences existed among university students from different countries, and those factors, which were key predictors of life satisfaction for different countries, were not the same (Rogowska et al., 2021). Academic life satisfaction was closely associated with both academic success and students' subjective well-being and health.

The connection between the students' attitudes and feelings regarding the university and their life satisfaction reached its peak, as evidenced by Zalazar-Jaime et al. (2022). The indicators of the life satisfaction of students at the university level included academic support, personality, and motivation (Ojeda et al., 2011). Recent research claimed that students scoring high on academic life satisfaction were seen to have more positive academic expectations, higher academic self-efficacy, more perceived progress towards their goals, and greater achievements (Antaramian & Lee, 2017; Koca et al., 2023). Moreover, academic life satisfaction was also associated with a person's general happiness, freedom from tension, and interest in life. This means, then, that it could be said that academic life satisfaction was relevant to psychology because it had an impact on an individual's overall well-being and success.

To add, academic satisfaction was an important factor that influenced student outcomes, whether it occurred in the traditional classroom or in online learning environments. Students' high satisfaction was related to high motivation levels, performance, academic resilience, learning efficiency, and academic success. Therefore, academic life satisfaction was an imperative outcome in assessing the effectiveness of the online learning processes that had spread after the COVID-19 pandemic (Koca et al., 2023).

Thus, the components of academic life satisfaction could be summarized as followed: (1) There was significant evidence establishing that undergraduate students showed a positive correlation between their success in schoolwork and their feelings of life satisfaction (Malik et al., 2013). When students were satisfied with their lives, they tend to perform better in their jobs, feel more fulfilled in their careers, showed more commitment to their organizations, and were less likely to leave their jobs (Antaramian & Lee, 2017); (2) Subjective well-being and personality traits both contributed to students' satisfaction with their lives. This included factors like self-worth, break time, and social relationships, which could affect overall life satisfaction (Ojeda et al.,

2011); (3) Factors such as having a balanced life and supportive relationships had been found to contribute to the overall satisfaction of graduate students (Stratton et al., 2006). Therefore, approach towards lifestyles, which had a correlation with a student's academic life, greatly affected a student's happiness; (4) Objectively important events, like living conditions, were another possible powerful determinant of a student's satisfaction as well. Such factors shall be external to the academic struggle and indirectly affect the experience, well-being, and happiness of the student, both during and after the academic struggle.

The Relationship of Academic Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) presented a framework for understanding the variables influencing an individual's academic and professional experiences, as well as their overall life satisfaction and career or work readiness. According to SCCT, the level of an individual's self-efficacy, their outcome expectations, and their goals played a decisive role in shaping their academic and career development and well-being (Lent, 2020).

Academic life satisfaction and work readiness could be studied under SCCT with regards to the effects of the beliefs of individuals about their abilities and expectations on the outcomes of their academic and career-related activities and goals for academic and career success on the satisfaction of their academic life and career readiness. By recognizing these factors, educators and career advisers could develop guiding approaches to help students and individuals gained better academic and occupation results (Lent, 2020).

METHODS

This section presents the research design, setting, and data instrument. It also included the study's participant selection and sampling, data collection procedure, and method of analysis.

Research Design. A quantitative predictive research design was used to collect data from the fresh graduates for this study. Through this

systematic gathering and analysis of data, the quantitative approaches carefully explore and analyze areas that were important through numerical data. The main reason for this design was to test the researchers' hypothesis and to retain or reject it, depending on the results. The aim for its use is to see the significant predictive relationship between academic life satisfaction and work readiness among fresh graduates.

Instrumentation. The researchers conducted data collection through the use of online questionnaires sent to multiple prospective participants. Several scales and instruments were used:

1. **Academic Life Satisfaction Scale (ALSS)**, by Kumar and Dileep (2006), is a self-report instrument that evaluated academic experiences and the transition to college life, with an 11-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (lowest) to 11 (highest). The ALSS was composed of several elements of emotional intelligence that included self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and social skills. It was a tool that reveals students' academic achievement as well as their feelings related to academic life. Reliability tests done, by Kumar and Dileep (2006), to the instrument resulted in a coefficient of 0.07. In this case, the 26-item scale that was constructed to evaluate emotional intelligence was shown to be criterion-related and valid, with a correlation coefficient of 0.782. By splitting the assessment into two parts, it got a reliability score level of 0.85.
2. **Work Readiness Scale (WRS)**, by Caballero and colleagues (2011), is the tool by which the work readiness of newly graduated workers was evaluated. Its main goal was to reveal the factors affecting work readiness. In this case, items include subjects such as questions asking whether s/he is constantly working to improve him/herself. Factor analysis on the instrument revealed that the scale had four components: personality, work competence, organizational awareness, and social intelligence. This set of factors was characterized by high

reliability and determined 44.7% of the variation, as a result of Caballero et al.'s review. The formation and evaluation of WRS for the first time implies that the chosen tool was an effective measure to determine the work readiness of graduates. The WRS had been verified in a couple of samples, which showcased its high construct validity and reliability. Nevertheless, it was necessary to emphasize that the scale used was related simply to being job-ready and may not be appropriate for diverse groups or characteristics.

Population and Sampling. In order to conduct the research, the researchers used the purposive sampling technique, a form of non-random sampling where participants are chosen based on meeting certain criteria or standards. Using G*Power, with a medium effect size, and 0.80 power, the study targeted 125 responses. The study focused on collecting data from participants with this inclusion criteria: fresh college graduates from May to December 2023 (within a year when the study was being conducted), whose ages range from 20 to 24 years old. Additionally, they are to be working either remotely, in hybrid, or onsite setup in Metro Manila, and were both male and female from various sectors. The researchers also incorporated snowball sampling to ensure accomplishment of the target number of samples.

Data Source. The researchers made a Google Form for the participants to answer the survey for the study. The survey, with its specific participation criteria and informed consent, was disseminated through social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram. To expand the number of potential participants, the researcher asked for assistance from acquaintances to share the survey with people that fit the criteria.

To get the targeted number in a timely manner, the researchers decided to browse through Facebook friends listed and send the survey through a private message to people who fit the criteria for the study. The researcher monitored the Google Form to see if the collected

information was correct. In cases where some information did not fit the criteria, such as the age and/or date of graduation, the researchers removed the participants' information for all variables measured in the study.

The first section was the informed consent, such as the purpose, risks, confidentiality of the study, duration of the survey, which was 15-20 minutes, depending on how fast they answered the questions, and contact information of the researchers. This part also included discussions concerning data storage, to which the researcher would only save the data until the end of the study. After such, the researcher would delete or destroy all the gathered data. Per the Data Privacy Act of 2012, participants' personal information would be kept strictly confidential.

The second section was the personal information of the participants, while the third section was for the ALSS questionnaire, which had 26 items. The last part of the questionnaire used in the data collection was for the WRS, which had a 64-item questionnaire.

Once the data was collected and was able to hit the targeted number of responses, the researchers exported the responses from Google Forms into an Excel spreadsheet. The researchers utilized SPSS version 26 (IBM, 2019) to compute the descriptive statistics and regression analysis in answering the research questions.

Procedurally, after the analysis, the researchers considered the results and findings, using the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2000), to develop a work readiness program. The aims and objectives of the program targeted the areas for improvement and structure needs that fresh graduates have to go through and experience to improve academic life satisfaction, which will lead to the goal of enhancing work readiness among new graduates.

Data Analysis. The gathered data on academic life satisfaction and work readiness could be analyzed using different statistical methods,

such as descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (i.e., regression analysis). Descriptive statistics answered the first two research questions on the level of academic life satisfaction and work readiness. Regression analysis was a technique that helped the researcher determine the strength, direction, and nature of the relationship between two factors, such as academic life satisfaction and work readiness.

Ethical Considerations. The researcher collected the participants' informed consent for the security of their confidentiality. Such consent must be clear enough to demonstrate the agreement of the participants. The participants only provided their data for the research, and the researcher ensured that there was no disclosure of private data. All identifying information was kept private and not given or released to anyone else, which assured privacy and confidentiality. The study gave participants the chance to drop out at any time, as they had the right to choose if they wanted to participate. On top of that, the researcher guaranteed that the participants were not harmed in the collection of the data. Personal data after the study was appropriately erased, and all research data was kept confidential.

RESULTS

The results shown below presented a summary of the statistical information obtained from the data collected from 125 fresh college graduates as samples, 75 of which are females and 49 are males; they are working in various job industries and settings in Metro Manila, 79 were working onsite, 30 were working in a hybrid setup, and 16 were working remotely.

Academic Life Satisfaction. Table 1 shows the degree to which the fresh graduates were satisfied with their academic life. The score of the 125 participants were found to have a very high level of satisfaction (M=9.14, SD=1.34). This suggests that the satisfaction of the participating fresh graduates had a significantly increased level.

Table 1
Level of the Participants' Academic Life Satisfaction (N=125)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Academic Life Satisfaction	9.14	1.34	Very High

On the studies conducted by Antaramian and Lee (2017) and Koca et al. (2023), it indicated that students with high academic satisfaction had higher academic expectations, self-efficacy, achievement, motivation, performance, academic resilience, learning efficiency, and academic success, indicating a positive significant predictive relationship between academic satisfaction and success.

Work Readiness. Table 2 presents the degree or level of the work readiness of the participants. The score indicated a moderate level of readiness (M=6.87, SD=0.52).

Table 2
Level of the Participants' Work Readiness (N=125)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Work Readiness	6.87	0.52	Moderate

Employability was something that concerned students and especially the newly employed individuals because it reflected their efficiency within the working environment. Several studies had shown that when the level of employee satisfaction was high, there was improved work performance, an enhanced level of career satisfaction, and improved organizational rates (Antaramian & Lee, 2017). The work readiness of the students was slowly beginning to be defined by how long they would remain in the labor market in their respective fields. The moderate results of the participants showed how some may be convinced of their own readiness to pursue work-related tasks after graduation. This is consistent with the study of Nurlaela et al. (2021), to which they noted that the average or moderate level of work-readiness can be predicted by self-efficacy—or what SSCT proposed.

Relationship of Academic Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness. To analyze and examine the predictive relationship of academic life

satisfaction and work readiness at the 0.05 significance level, simple linear regression analysis was computed through SPSS version 26 (IBM, 2019).

Table 3
Regression Analysis of Work Readiness on Academic Life Satisfaction (N=125)

	B	SE	t	p	Interpretation
(Constant)	4.287	1.553	2.76	.007	
Work readiness	0.706	0.226	3.13	.002	Significant
R	0.272				
R ²	0.074				
F	9.81***				
df	1, 123				
p	.002				

*** Significant at .001 level

The results show that there is a significant predictive relationship between the predictor and outcome variables; that is, the findings show that there is a weak positive prediction from academic life satisfaction to work readiness (R=0.272), indicating that about 7.4% of the work readiness is explained by the academic life satisfaction of the fresh graduates.

The F-value of 9.81, associated with a p-value of 0.002, reveals statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This presents that in every one (1) unit increase in the academic life satisfaction of fresh graduates, there is a predicted 0.706 level increase in their work readiness.

Academic life satisfaction and work readiness were major areas that had a great effect on the social welfare of society. Students who were satisfied in academics provided better performance in the jobs that they were offering, showed being more content in their careers, were more committed to the organizations they worked for, and were less likely to search for other employment (Antaramian & Lee, 2017).

Proposed Work Readiness Program. Using the results from the analysis of the academic life satisfaction, work readiness, and their significant predictive relationship, the researchers proposed a work readiness program.

Table 4
Proposed Work Readiness Program

Target	Outcomes / Objectives	Activities	Resources Needed	Measure of Success
Students who have no work experiences	The students should be provided with the requisite skills and experience to market themselves and get them ready to face the challenges of the workplace efficiently.	Job Shadowing/ Resume Building/ Interview Techniques	Job platforms/ Career Fairs/ Events	The target benefited from the activities by learning how the resume should be formatted and was able to exhibit their capabilities in answering interview questions, job roles, and etiquette.
Students who had work experiences	The students should be in a position to build on their skills, promote career progression, and remain relevant in the labor market.	Workplace etiquette	Coaching/ Mentoring	The target learned from the views and opinions given by the coach or the mentor on the performance of the activity.
Final-year students with a high level of academic satisfaction	To leverage the high academic satisfaction of participants to enhance their work readiness.	Project-based learning	Coaching/ Mentoring	The target was able to maintain the aspect of high academic satisfaction, as measured using an academic satisfaction tool.
Recent Graduates / Young professionals with a low or moderate level of work readiness	To improve the level to a high level, focusing on key areas that enhance their skills, confidence, and preparedness for the workforce.	Simulated Work Environments	Coaching/ Mentoring	The target achieved a high level of work readiness, as measured using a work readiness tool.

DISCUSSION

The participants of this study were comprised of 125 fresh college graduates from May to December 2023 (76 were females, and 49 were males) who were working in various job settings and industries in Metro Manila. There were 79 participants who were working on an onsite setting, 30 participants were working on a hybrid setup, and 16 participants working remotely. Upon analysis of the gathered results, it was found that, on average, the participants had a high level of satisfaction with their academic lives. As for work readiness, the participants generally have a moderate level of readiness to enter the workforce. Lastly, on the basis of the predictive relationship, the academic life satisfaction of fresh graduates was found to have a significant relationship with work readiness.

This study was founded on the theory that involved the relationship between academic life satisfaction and work readiness among fresh graduates. According to SCCT, an individual's level of self-efficacy, their standard of outcomes, and their goals were important in determining how well they developed academically and professionally (Lent & Brown, 2019). By identifying these variables, educators and career counselors could create guiding

strategies to assist individuals and students in improving their academic and professional performance.

Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that satisfaction with academic life was a major focus and its relation to work readiness among fresh graduates. The researcher investigated whether or not students' satisfaction affected their preparedness for the job market after graduating from college. This was mainly focused on how satisfied students were with various aspects of their college experiences and how to improve these to make universities more accommodating to the needs of qualified young professionals in terms of career development.

The results indicated the relationship between academic life satisfaction and work readiness has several outcomes. The outcomes of this research could be good for education authorities and decision-makers. The findings advised that exploring strategies for increasing university students' satisfaction have an effect on how they would be ready for a job. These may suggest student support services, encouraging a culture of student engagement, and the provision of a collaborative and innovative environment for educational institutes.

With this, it is highly recommended for educational institutions to emphasize improving students' life satisfaction and well-being by providing suitable practice and employability skills, establishing an enjoyable campus environment, collaborating with mental health professionals, and doing more research linking academic life satisfaction and work readiness. Industrial institutions can promote collaboration with colleges and universities that should be taken into consideration, and training workshops focused on achieving these objectives should be offered. Industrial institutions that care for workers' well-being can also give students hands-on learning. Program implementers can refer to the proposed work readiness program above, utilize them or improve them to ensure academic life satisfaction among students.

Lastly, future researchers could further extend knowledge by utilizing more advanced strategies based on current research, which would empower and equip students for success in both the university and the job market.

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