(Research/Review) Article

Exploring Career Preparation: The Role of Freelance Job, Soft Skill Development, and Interest in Entrepreneurship for Generation Z (Study in Semarang)

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to measure the influence and contribution of the freelance job, soft skill development, and interest in entrepreneurship on Generation Z career preparation in Semarang City. Using a quantitative approach, this study utilized a five-point Likert scale to measure the questionnaire on primary data. A total of 112 respondents' survey data was tested using the purposive sampling method and analyzed with the classical assumption test and multiple regression in SPSS Statistics 25. The result shows that the freelance job is found to have influenced career preparation significantly and positively. It was also found that soft skill development influenced career preparation significantly and positively. Additionally, interest in entrepreneurship has a significant and positive influence on career preparation.

Keywords: Career Preparation; Freelance Job; Soft Skill Development; Interest in Entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

The world of work and the global economy continue to move forward, providing either new opportunities or challenges in daily operations, including government operations, educational institutions, companies, and businesses (Tunçsiper, 2025). Graduates have to be thoroughly prepared to navigate the complexities of the work environment (Guo, 2025). Therefore, career preparation will enhance the maturity of individuals in future careers and help them survive amid the uncertainty. In recent times, youth generations, particularly Generation Z, are constantly innovating with the acquired digital tools and increasing their chances to be future leaders (Ma & Fang, 2023). They value education and personal achievement as long-term investments and even dedicate time to actively working or engaging in many activities, such as organizations or communities (Febriana & Mujib, 2024). Through these, they will grow professionally and personally and develop strong career identities (Kang, 2023). However, a career is complex because individuals need to settle into a clear pathway and effective strategies for personal growth and development. If one prepares for a career early, it will have a significant impact on one's personal life and profession (Parola & Felaco, 2024).

Society generally perceives Generation Z as career-minded individuals who are constantly considered tech enthusiasts because they seamlessly integrate technology into their work and create new possibilities across various jobs and professions (Damayanti & Prahoro, 2025). They were born between 1995 and 2012. Gen Zers have become an increasingly significant portion of the workforce, locally and internationally (Jayatissa, 2023). In the Republic of Indonesia, the Central Statistics Agency noted there are 74.93 million Gen Z individuals, or 27.94% of the total population, who are of productive age and already in the workforce. As a rising generation, Gen Zers have already played a significant role in advocating for inclusivity in all spheres of society (Hendratmoko & Mutiarawati, 2024). Indonesia is one of the developing countries in the world, and it has a struggling economy that includes the stability of human resources. Unemployment is one of the main concerns of the Indonesian economy. However, job demands are becoming increasingly demanding and complicated; for instance, the younger generations are not only competing with fellow fresh graduates but also experienced workers and even foreign workers coming to Indonesia to establish a business. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reveals that the unemployment rate in Indonesia in

April 2025 was 5.1%, the highest in Southeast Asia since 4.91% in August 2024; it can affect broader socioeconomic issues, including growth and development. If the government is stagnant, the next generations will not be able to compete fiercely at the international level (Reddy et al., 2024). One of the major cities that significantly contributes to Indonesia's economy, especially in the manufacturing, trade, and logistics industries, is Semarang, located in Central Java. In addition, Semarang is also a center of higher education and often a destination for immigration.

Research by Deepa Agrawal (2024) states that Gen Z is moving forward toward more profitable careers, including freelancing and entrepreneurship. However, freelancers and entrepreneurs can significantly contribute to a country's economic growth (Freund et al., 2025). According to research by Sheraz Khan et al. (2025), working in the freelance and entrepreneurial intention not only advances individuals' careers but also enhances the essential skills of human resources. Furthermore, it presents for the modern job market. This may reflect the potential for the country to be poised for sustained growth and development (Ahmed & Lucianetti, 2024). Based on actual phenomena in the surrounding environment, the author has conducted a pre-survey of 30 Gen Z individuals in Semarang; the following responses were obtained:

Table 1. Pra-survey Results

Variable	Statement Item	Yes (%)	No (%)
Freelance Job	I feel that freelance work is very helpful for my finances.	90	10
	I am very familiar with the current freelance platforms.	76.7	23.3
	I feel that there has been an improvement in my skills.	40	60
	I will continue my career as a freelancer.	40	60
Soft Skill Development	I feel more interactive in doing my tasks.	73.3	26.7
	I am capable of working in a team.	90	10
	I easily adapt to new environments.	86.7	13.3
	I understand the feelings of others in certain situations.	90	10
	I always strive to complete tasks with full responsibility.	93.3	6.7
Interest in Entrepreneurship	Currently, I am considering starting a business.	73.3	26.7
	I am confident I can face difficulties in the business world.	53.3	46.7
	I feel that I have enough knowledge to develop my business and enterprise.	46.7	53.3
Career Preparation	I have relevant experience in my field.	50	50
	My skills are sufficient to compete in the job market.	80	20
	My family has been supportive of my field of expertise and career choice.	93.3	6.7
	I have a strong personal branding to career development.	93.3	6.7
	I feel ready to enter into the workforce after completing my education.	90	10

Source: 30 Gen Z Individuals in Semarang

Based on the pre-survey results, 60% of individuals felt unconfident as freelancers and decided not to pursue a freelance career as their main job. The results indicate that they have interest in entrepreneurship, but they lack the knowledge to run a business (53.3%). However, they respond well to soft skill development, which shows that most individuals have soft skills and potentially contribute to their career preparation. They have career aspirations in the field of freelancing and a strong drive to create jobs through independent business ventures. This is in line with several studies that have revealed the effort to achieve career goals can help individuals to shape a better brand in order to get their dream job (Arthur et al., 2025). Various previous studies have extensively discussed the variables of freelance jobs, soft skill development, and interest in entrepreneurship. However, there is limited research that examines these three variables simultaneously within a comprehensive model of career preparation. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the influence of these three independent variables on career preparation.

In that context, freelancing experience can be one form of an individual's active effort in preparing themselves to face the job market. Through freelance work, individuals, especially students or fresh graduates, have the opportunity to gain real work experience, develop soft skills such as communication and time management, and foster an interest in entrepreneurship due to becoming accustomed to working independently and adaptively. Based on the background above, the authors are conducting a study entitled "Exploring Career Preparation: The Role of Freelance Job, Soft Skill Development, and Interest in Entrepreneurship for Generation Z (Study in Semarang)."

2. Literature Review

2.1. Freelance Job

A freelance job is understood as modern because it is driven by digital technology that allows creative, technical, and service industries to find work remotely or independently from digital platforms. It offers freedom for an individual to work across various professions from all over the globe, including flexible hours, work-life balance, and premium rates (Suryani & Rasji, 2024). Freelancers build a professional identity based on skills and engage in short-term projects with less emphasis on formal qualifications (Pranchastika & Gusnita, 2024). In addition, they can collaborate with multiple clients. According to Mamentu & Utami (2021), a freelance job is a small business that is categorized as informal work because freelancers do not have a fixed workplace, including income or employment contract terms. However, they can be skilled and have the potential to master many types of jobs.

Based on the researchers' statements, it can be concluded that freelancing is possible as an alternative job amidst economic uncertainty and as a side hustle in the face of intense competition. This variable can be measured with these indicators: (1) the need to get benefits; individuals try to work in varied freelance job from many clients to get both experience and high income; (2) information collection about freelance job opportunities through freelance platforms and social media; (3) practical efforts and the desire to train and develop specific skills for many times, not only working from home but also meeting directly with their clients if needed; and (4) reasoned decision-making, based on freelance experience, will encourage individuals to be more confident in choosing a job and profession for future careers. Individuals interested in freelance work are driven by the desire to gain benefits, so they explore a wider range of information. They strive to try new things in the freelance world, which helps develop skills and experience. This experience, in turn, allows them to make better career decisions (Ayoobzadeh, 2022).

2.2 Soft Skill Development

According to Mwita et al. (2023), the development of soft skills refers to the enhancement of effective and efficient performance. Soft skills are a long-term investment that can lead individuals to high levels in their careers. Therefore, soft skills have become as important as any other skill. Mattajang (2023) states that soft skill development is incredibly important because it shapes how people interact with others and navigate both personal and professional life. Skills like emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and problem-solving are essential for building strong relationships and succeeding in any career. Soft skills are attributes and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior. Individuals may have meaningful interactions with society and increase their chances of employability (Ingsih & Stikubank, 2023). Regarding the explanations from the researchers, it can be concluded that soft skill development is closely related to situation adaptation so they can navigate challenges and obstacles with confidence and determination. Research states that soft skill development can be measured by five items: (1) interacting effectively with others, respecting time to work and being responsible at work and in personal life, being able to participate as a team, and having good control over personal emotions for a better working atmosphere (Patricia Aprilita & Pritasari, 2024).

2.3 Interest in Entrepreneurship

Based on research by Lestari et al. (2023), the interest in entrepreneurship is defined as the enthusiasm of individuals towards creating, developing, and organizing a new business. Entrepreneurs usually have a high motivation and intention to enter the business market. Similar to Nataliningsih & Suseno (2024), individuals who have an interest in entrepreneurship can see opportunities because they have a passion for innovation and are encouraged to develop their business or enterprise. Entrepreneurs have a clear vision for their future career. Meanwhile, research by Rozikin & Suyati (2023) explained that entrepreneurship is a potential field because entrepreneurs work for themselves and not for some other person's success. This is not only for business start-ups and SMEs but also for social enterprise sectors. Overall, the author describes someone who is interested in entrepreneurship as a person with a strong curiosity to create jobs independently and understand the customer's needs. Furthermore, entrepreneurship empowers individuals to create something impactful. This can be measured with these indicators: (1) career planning, (2) commitment, and (3) social support. To realize an interest in entrepreneurship, one needs to plan their career vision, commit to achieving their goals, and have social support for the business they build (Arfah et al., 2023).

2.4 Career Preparation

Career preparation refers to the process of recognizing potential talents, interests, strengths, and weaknesses before entering actual working life (Pratiwi & Mutmainah, 2021). Those preparations are not only about the ongoing process but also about appreciating the value of career adventure so that they prepare themselves mentally and physically to reach the highest level of achievement in the career field they have chosen (Samudra & Wangid, 2024). Career preparation is the process of outlining the steps necessary to achieve personal and career goals. It involves self-assessment, research, and strategic planning to align one's skills, interests, and values with potential career paths (Pranata & Nur Fajri Rahmawati, 2024). Effective career preparation can lead to greater job satisfaction, improved performance, and a clearer pathway to achieving one's professional aspirations. This variable can be measured with indicators, as follows: (1) the need for individuals to advance by being prepared, (2) the ability to achieve a dream career by making targets, (3) self-evaluation to enter into professionalism, and (4) building a strong personal brand (Lee et al., 2022).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

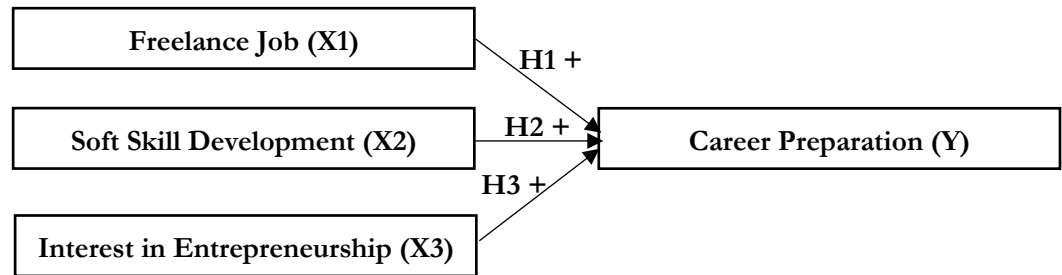Based on the literature review above, a hypothesis can be formulated through the following descriptions:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explains that the variables are Freelance Job (X1), Soft Skill Development (X2), and Interest in Entrepreneurship (X3). Has a positive influence on career preparation (Y). That is, we can conclude that if the independent variables can be done correctly, then the performance of career preparation will develop and increase.

a.   H1 : There is an influence between freelance job and career preparation.
b.   H2 : There is an influence between soft skill development and career preparation.
c.   H3 : There is an influence between interest in entrepreneurship and career preparation.

3. Proposed Method

In this research, a quantitative approach was integrated with a focus on hypothesis testing. The aim is to examine the role of three variables, namely freelance job (X1), soft skill development (X2), and interest in entrepreneurship (X3), on career preparation (Y). The author conducted this research from February 7 to February 21, 2025.

The study's data was gathered using questionnaires distributed to Generation Z via Google Forms. The instrument consists of 16 questions. The author developed the indicators into question items and measured them using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The research used purposive sampling and involved 112 respondents. The sampling criteria are (1) Generation Z (born 1997-2012), (2) domiciled in Semarang, and (3) having freelance work experience, whether part-time or independent projects, for instance become a translator, social media management, photography, influencer, freelance writing or editing and many more.

From the conducted research, some of the indicators have been translated as follows:

Table 2. Statement on the Questionnaire

	Statement Item
1	I think freelance jobs offer diverse work opportunities and benefits.
2	I often look for freelance job openings.
3	I have a lot of experience working freelance.
4	Freelance job can help me in determining my future career.
5	I feel confident when presenting my ideas or thoughs to others.
6	I can manage the time between personal life and work.
7	I am capable of completing tasks thoroughly, whether individual or as part of a team.
8	I feel happy when collaborating with clients.
9	My work gets disrupted when I'm in a bad mood.
10	I am considering the intention to start a business.
11	I feel ready to pursue a career in the world of entrepreneurship.
12	I receive support to start a business.
13	I feel ready to dive into the professional world.
14	I have goals (short and long term) that I need to achieve.

| 15 | I often attend training sessions to improve my skills. |
| 16 | I have a strong personal branding to enter the professional world. |

Source: Researcher, 2025

Following that, each variable is calculated, and the data is analyzed. Hypotheses were tested and proven by applying multiple linear regression models as analytical tools with classical assumption tests to ensure the model's validity and reliability, as well as f-tests, t-tests, and r-squared to measure the significance and contribution of the variables in explaining the dependent variable. Data analysis was performed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 25. The research model for this study can be stated as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \varepsilon$$

Information:
Y   : Career Preparation
X1   : Freelance Job
X2   : Soft Skill Development
X3   : Interest in Entrepreneurship
α   : Constant
β   : Coefficient
ε   : Other Factors

4. Results and Discussion

A comprehensive explanation of the characteristics of the respondents who are the objects of the research used includes the respondents' identities, such as age, gender, educational status, and employment status. From the total sample of 112 Gen Z (respondents), there were 25 male individuals (22.3%) and 87 female individuals (77.7%). Based on age, there are 76 individuals (67.9%) aged 17-22 years, and 36 individuals (32.1%) aged 23-28 years. Based on educational status, there are 65 individuals (58%) with high school degrees, 3 individuals (2.7%) with associate's degrees, 43 individuals (38.4%) with bachelor's degrees, and 1 individual (0.9%) with a master's degree. Based on employment status, each individual can choose more than one option, and the results are as follows: 66 individuals (58.9%) are students, 11 individuals (9.8%) are entrepreneurs, 18 individuals (16.1%) are freelancers, 12 individuals (10.7%) are not currently employed, 25 individuals (22.3%) are full-time workers, and 13 individuals (11.6%) are part-time workers. Despite there being variations in the respondents' employment status, all respondents were known to have experience working as freelancers, whether as a main job or a side job, thus meeting the criteria to participate in this study.

The respondent's perception assessment in this study was conducted using a 1-5 Likert scale. To facilitate interpretation, the average scores are classified into five categories, namely: 1.00-1.79 (very low), 1.80-2.59 (low), 2.60-3.39 (sufficient), 3.40-4.19 (high), and 4.20-5.00 (very high). This classification is used to provide a clearer picture of the respondents' answer tendencies towards each variable being studied. The results of the descriptive analysis show that respondents' perceptions of the freelance job variable fall into the high category, with an average score of 3.62. The variable of soft skill development is also in the high category, with an average score of 3.79, as well as the interest in entrepreneurship (3.63). The career preparation variable, as the dependent variable, received an average score of 3.85, which falls into the high category. In general, these results indicate that respondents have a positive perception of their freelance job experience, which also encourages personal skill development, increases interest in entrepreneurship, and supports their readiness to plan and face their future careers.

4.1. Validity Analysis

The items to be tested for validity are 16 items. The respondents, or N analyzed, were 112 samples. The validation process was assisted by the SPSS 25 program with a significance level of 5% and DF = 112 – 2 = 110, resulting in an r-table of 0.1857. Another term for r-count is the item-rest correlation or the corrected item-total correlation; if r-count > r-table value, it means the questionnaire item is confirmed valid. Shown in the table below:

Table 3. Validity Results

Variable	Statement	R-calculate	Information ($\sqrt{}$=Valid, X=Invalid)
Freelance Job (X1)	X1.1	0.515	$\sqrt{}$
	X1.2	0.317	$\sqrt{}$
	X1.3	0.393	$\sqrt{}$
	X1.4	0.478	$\sqrt{}$
Soft Skill Development (X2)	X2.1	0.610	$\sqrt{}$
	X2.2	0.600	$\sqrt{}$
	X2.3	0.603	$\sqrt{}$
	X2.4	0.657	$\sqrt{}$
	X2.5	0.281	$\sqrt{}$
Interest in Entrepreneurship (X3)	X3.1	0.614	$\sqrt{}$
	X3.2	0.541	$\sqrt{}$
	X3.3	0.637	$\sqrt{}$
Career Preparation (Y)	Y.1	0.646	$\sqrt{}$
	Y.2	0.622	$\sqrt{}$
	Y.3	0.500	$\sqrt{}$
	Y.4	0.534	$\sqrt{}$

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

Based on Table 3, since the validity values of all the survey indicators are greater than this limit (0.1857). As a result, the questionnaire statement can be used for further testing.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is conducted to test the consistency of data and the data's reliability; on that basis, a final decision is taken regarding data to be treated as good or bad. If the Cronbach's Alpha is equal or greater than 0.60, the instrument is considered reliable.

Table 4. Reliability Results

Variable	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha
Freelance Job (X1)	X1.1	0.814
	X1.2	0.828
	X1.3	0.827
	X1.4	0.816
Soft Skill Development (X2)	X2.1	0.808
	X2.2	0.809
	X2.3	0.808
	X2.4	0.805
	X2.5	0.836

Interest in Entrepreneurship (X3)	X3.1	0.808
	X3.2	0.813
	X3.3	0.806
Career Preparation (Y)	Y.1	0.806
	Y.2	0.808
	Y.3	0.816
	Y.4	0.813

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

Based on Table 4, it can be said that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value for each variable item exceeds 0.60 (the reliability threshold), indicating that it can be considered consistent. Thus, it proves that the reliability testing of each variable is declared reliable. The three variables, namely freelance job (X1), soft skill development (X2), and interest in entrepreneurship (X3), consistently influence the career preparation (Y), making this finding reliable and justifiable.

4.3 Normality Analysis

A statistical test for normality aims to measure the extent to which the collected data is taken. Is this from a normal population or not.

Table 5. Normality Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Unstandardized Residual
N	112
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.096[c]
a. Test distribution is Normal.	
b. Calculated from data.	

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

The results in the table above were obtained using one-sample Kolmogrov-Smirnov tests and indicated that the Asymp. Sig. value is 0.096, > 0.05. In conclusion, the data obtained is in a normal distribution and meets the classical assumptions of multiple linear regression.

4.4 Multicollinearity Analysis

The multicollinearity test is an examination to detect whether there is a high or perfect correlation among independent variables in a regression model. To test for the presence of multicollinearity, focus on the tolerance and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) values. Multicollinearity is considered to occur if the Tolerance value is below 0.10 or VIF is above 10, because these conditions can disrupt the accuracy of regression coefficient estimates and the interpretation of analysis results.

Table 6. Multicollinearity Results

Coefficients[a]			
Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Freelance Job	0.908	1.101
	Soft Skill Development	0.837	1.194
	Interest in Entrepreneurship	0.817	1.225
a. Dependent Variable: Career Preparation			

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

The table 6 results were observed that the tolerance values for variables freelance job, soft skill development, and interest in entrepreneurship are, respectively, 0.908 (> 0.1), 0.837

(> 0.1), and 0.817 (> 0.1). The VIF values of the three independent variables are 1.101 (< 10), 1.194 (< 10), and 1.225 (< 10). Therefore, the assumption of no mullticollinearity is met.

Hypothesis Testing

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

To determine the influence of a freelance job (X1), soft skill development (X2), interest in entrepreneurship (X3), and career preparation (Y), multiple linear regression analysis was used. The multiple linear regression analysis output is as follows:

Table 7. Regression Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.955	1.550		3.196	0.002
	Freelance Job	0.245	0.086	0.237	2.833	0.006
	Soft Skill Development	0.203	0.067	0.263	3.031	0.003
	Interest in Entrepreneurship	0.285	0.093	0.271	3.077	0.003
a. Dependent Variable: Career Preparation						

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

Based on Table 7, the following multiple linear regression equation is obtained.

$$Y = 4.955 + 0.245 X1 + 0.203 X2 + 0.285 X3 + \varepsilon$$

From the regression equation above, it is known that
1.   The constant value of 4.955 indicates that if the values of variables such as a freelance job, soft skill development, and interest in entrepreneurship equal null, then the value of career preparation will remain at a level of 4.955.
2.   The coefficient of the regression value of the variable freelance job is 0.245, which means that every change of 1 unit of a freelance job will increase career preparation by 0.245.
3.   The coefficient of the regression value of the variable soft skill development is 0.203, which means that every change of 1 unit of soft skill development will increase career preparation by 0.203.
4.   The coefficient of the regression value of the variable interest in entrepreneurship is 0.285, which means that every change of 1 unit of interest in entrepreneurship will increase career preparation by 0.285.

4.6 Simultaneous Analysis (F-test)

The F test shows whether all the independent variables included in the regression model have a simultaneous effect on dependent variable. The results of the simultaneous test (F-test) can be seen in the table below:

Table 8. F-test Results

Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	240.514	3	80.171	16.675	.000[b]
	Residual	519.262	108	4.808		
	Total	759.777	111			
a. Dependent Variable: Career Preparation						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Interest in Entrepreneurship, Freelance Job, Soft Skill Development						

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

Based on Table 8, it is known that the significance value is 0.000, which means the value significance in the table is < 0.05. Thus, it proves that the freelance job (X1), soft skill development (X2), and interest in entrepreneurship (X3) all influence the variable of career preparation simultaneously. If we look at the F-value, it is 16.675 because f-calculate = 16.675 > f-table = 2.69; it can be concluded that all independent variable used in this study simultaneously have a significant effect on career preparation.

4.7 Partial Analysis (T-test)

Hypothesis testing using the T-test is conducted to determine the effect of a significant independent variable on the dependent variable by measuring the relationship between a free variable and a bound variable. The significance level is 5% and DF = 112 - 3 - 1, resulting in a t-table value of 1.981. On that basis, a final decision is taken where sig. < 0.05, which means Ha is accepted while H0 is rejected. The results of the partial test (T-test) can be seen in the table below:

Table 9. T-test Results

Coefficients[a]						
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.955	1.550		3.196	0.002
	Freelance Job	0.245	0.086	0.237	2.833	0.006
	Soft Skill Development	0.203	0.067	0.263	3.031	0.003
	Interest in Entrepreneurship	0.285	0.093	0.271	3.077	0.003
a. Dependent Variable: Career Preparation						

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

Based on the results of data processing, finding output can concluded as follows.
1. Tstatistic value of a freelance job variable (X1) has positive (+) value 2.833 > table t value of 1.981 with probability sig. value of 0.006 < 0.05. This suggests that H1 is accepted, concluding that a freelance job impact on career preparation.
2. Tstatistic value of soft skill development (X2) has positive (+) value of 3.031 > table t value of 1.981 with probability sig. value of 0.003 < 0.05. This suggests that H2 is accepted, concluding that soft skill development impact on career preparation.
3. Tstatistic value of the interest in entrepreneurship variable (X3) has positive (+) value of 3.077 > table t value of 1.981 with probability sig. value of 0.003 < 0.05. This suggests that H3 is accepted, concluding that interest in entrepreneurship impact on career preparation.

4.8 Coefficient of Determination Analysis (R-test)

The R^2 model fit test in this study is used to show the level of relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. R^2, or the coefficient of determination, serves to determine the extent of the influence exerted by the independent variables collectively on the dependent variable. Here is the test output.

Table 10. Coefficient of Determination Results

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.563[a]	0.317	0.298	2.193
a. Predictors: (Constant), Interest in Entrepreneurship, Freelance Job, Soft Skill Development				

Source: Primary Data Results, Processed SPSS 25 (2025)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.317 indicates that the regression model used in this study is able to explain 31.7% of the variability in career preparation (Y), while 68.3% is explained by other variables that were not studied in this study.

The Influence of Freelance Job on Career Preparation

The study results indicate that the freelance job variable (X1) has a significant influence on career preparation (Y), with a positive relationship direction, meaning that the more freelance experience one has, the more the career preparedness of the respondents increases. These findings align with research by Miller (2020), conducted on freelancers in Poland, which states that freelance work, despite being informal, can make a significant contribution to individual career preparation and development. Work flexibility, freedom in choosing projects, and the varied challenges in the freelance world serve as learning opportunities that strengthen both the technical and emotional abilities of individuals. Thus, freelance work can serve as a platform for exploration and character building while also providing a strong foundation in preparing individuals for their future professional careers.

Research by Garcia (2024), conducted on individuals with freelance experience in the Philippines, also supports this finding, showing that for career preparation, they can actively engage in freelance work. Despite working in an unstable gig economy, these individuals have a strong motivation to develop their skills and enhance their visibility in the professional world. By expanding their work experience, these individuals can strengthen their readiness to pursue careers in formal organizations. These findings reinforce that freelance jobs significantly contribute to preparing individuals in the pre-employment phase to transition into a larger and more structured work environment.

Research by Ghosh (2024) highlights that freelancers, as protean careerists, have the freedom to change and adjust their career paths according to emerging opportunities, which gives them an advantage in facing the dynamics of the job market. Freelancers often pursue not only jobs or income but also their career journeys, which allows them to be more independent and take responsibility for their career development. With these protean characteristics, they have the opportunity to continuously adapt to industry changes and navigate the increasingly complex challenges of the working world without getting stuck in established career paths. This allows individuals to better prepare for their careers by developing the necessary competencies to meet career expectations and goals while also helping them to form a stronger career identity.

The Influence of Soft Skill Development on Career Preparation

The study results indicate that the variable of soft skill development (X2) has a significant influence on career preparation (Y). The relationship formed is positive, which means that the better the development of soft skills of individuals, the more it improves their abilities to face the workforce. These findings are in line with the research conducted by Suparmi & Suprapti (2023), which found that developing soft skills has a positive and significant impact on individuals who are preparing for their careers. Showing a strong relationship between soft skill abilities and success in the career progression process. Thus, the research findings of Suparmi & Suprapti (2023) further reinforce this conclusion that soft skills play a crucial role from the preparation stage to career development.

This study's results are also in line with previous research conducted by Che Amat & Talhah (2021), which shows that the development of soft skills, along with the enhancement of self-efficacy, also plays an important role in long-term career development, especially among Gen Z individuals in Malaysia. Although both studies emphasize different aspects, namely career preparation and career development, they are interconnected because soft skills are a key factor that helps individuals grow, both at the early stages of their careers and in their longer career journeys.

These findings are also supported by research conducted by Ngo (2024) on undergraduate students in Vietnam, which shows that the majority of respondents recognize the importance of soft skills not only for supporting academic performance but also for future career preparation, including the job search process. The study also identified that students tend to prioritize the development of soft skills because they are considered crucial assets and a form of evaluation of their skill readiness. Thus, this research reinforces the finding that individual preparation requires soft skill development to become more mature and competitive.

The Influence of Interest in Entrepreneurship on Career Preparation

The study results indicate that interest in entrepreneurship (X3) has a significant impact on career preparation (Y). The direction of the formed relationship is positive, so the higher the individual's interest in entrepreneurship, the more likely they are to enter the workforce. The findings in the research by Md Zaini et al. (2023) align with the results of this study,

where the presence of entrepreneurial intention positively contributes to individual career preparation. The research revealed that through entrepreneurship education programs, individuals are not only encouraged to develop their interest in the field of entrepreneurship but also acquire practical skills and insights that are essential in preparing for their future careers. Individuals with a high interest in entrepreneurship tend to be more disciplined, visionary, and strive for their achievements independently. This shows that an interest in entrepreneurship not only reflects a desire to work independently but also represents a readiness to manage one's career proactively, making it one of the important factors in long-term career preparation.

Research conducted by Ogbar (2023) on students at universities in Nigeria aligns with the findings of this study, which show that graduates' skills in entrepreneurship have great potential for their future careers. This research emphasizes the importance of career preparation by shifting the entrepreneurial mindset towards an increasingly competitive job market and daring to take steps to expand capacity and open opportunities in the job market. Therefore, education and entrepreneurial experience can foster a sense of enthusiasm and exploration spirit in pioneering their careers while also enhancing their readiness to face the dynamics of the job market.

Research by Brausch-Böger & Förster (2024) indicates that entrepreneurial projects, such as startup projects, have a positive impact on career preparation, which is relevant to the findings in this research. These entrepreneurial projects develop essential and transversal skills, such as creativity, initiative, and decision-making abilities, and all aspects that are also necessary in career preparation. Career-oriented initiatives serve as a solid foundation in preparing individuals to pursue a successful career path. This further strengthens the argument that interest in entrepreneurship or experience in entrepreneurship projects not only enriches skills but also provides strong preparation for future careers.

6. Conclusions

This study found that the variables of freelance jobs, soft skill development, and interest in entrepreneurship each have a significant and positive influence on Generation Z's career preparation, both partially and simultaneously. These findings underscore the significance of these factors in molding individuals' readiness prior to entering the professional workforce. Nevertheless, there are other external variables beyond the scope of this research that may also impact career preparation. Furthermore, this study contributes to existing literature regarding youth career readiness in the framework of an emerging labor market.

This study provides practical value for educational institutions and the younger generation by highlighting the importance of early career preparation as a foundation for future professional and personal success. However, the study is limited in terms of geographic coverage and respondent diversity, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, subsequent studies are encouraged to involve broader geographic regions and more diverse populations to enhance external validity. In addition, the study results may serve as a useful reference in the development of career preparation programs that align with the needs and characteristics of the emerging workforce.

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