# Analysis of the Path of influence of work skills in the new normal life of the undergraduate students in Thailand

Naksit Sakdapat

Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, Faculty of Humanities,
University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thailand
Email: Naksit9@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8689-4046

## Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the characteristics that enable students to adapt and enhance their work skills to meet labor market demands. In this quantitative study, a correlational–comparative analysis was used to determine numerous factors' direct and indirect effects on the work skill variable in the new normal life. This appropriately identifies methods for developing the work skills of university students. This study's sample consisted of 789 undergraduate students selected by multistage random sampling. Twelve sets of variable assessment measures were utilized in total. Each measurement set was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis. The route of influence study utilizing the linear structure-relationship model demonstrated that the model had a linear structural relationship and was compatible with the empirical data. This study emphasizes the significance of mental health characteristics, family role model recognition, and attitude toward developing work skills in the new normal period. These variables are causal variables that assist students in adapting to the new regular life and building working abilities. In the concluding section, the researcher offered approaches for students to acquire vital skills to prepare them for employment in the new normal period.

**Keywords:** Work skills, Path of influence, Undergraduate students

## 1. Introduction

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is influencing people's behavior and daily activities (Viskupic et al., 2021). The original working methods and commercial operations are modified until they become the new norm (Phetkliang, 2022). The rapid transformation of the labor market is accelerated by the development of technology that facilitates the replacement of specific tasks to a significant degree.

University-taught knowledge may no longer be adequate for working in the contemporary environment.

According to the findings of Arinda, Wilujeng, and Kuswanto's (2019) study on the job skills of a group of recent college graduates, entrepreneurs believe Thai students still lack adequate work abilities. They still lack numerous industry-required vital labor abilities, such as foreign language, digital, and creative thinking skills. Since university students will enter the workforce in the future, it is recommended that they acquire additional skills while they are still in school. In addition, because the work of today is highly competitive and continuously changing, hard skills may only be a part of the job. But, soft skills should be combined with social skills to boost employment chances even more.

Whoever prepares better will have the edge in this competition (Succi & Canovi, 2020). University instruction for Thai students in higher education focuses on learning in a particular professional area of that field. The majority of pupils lack work experience. Although universities in Thailand provide internship courses, some students enroll in a cooperative education program to obtain a 4-6 month internship. Unfortunately, it is still insufficient for kids to learn about work thoroughly. As a result, students graduate with a body of information but cannot apply that knowledge to the workplace. They must undergo training and education for some period before beginning a job (Fajaryati & Akhyar, 2020).

Due to the low-income rate, it was also observed that Thai students were less interested in working part-time (Hoang & Huy, 2021). In addition, the current state of the labor market is characterized by intense rivalry, and it has been discovered that the rising unemployment rate has allowed many firms to hire brilliant individuals with comprehensive skills, experienced individuals, and team players. Thus, the students can serve as human resources to help the firm overcome the Thai economy's tendency toward recession.

This research aims to investigate the direct and indirect impacts of psychological features and conditions on the work skills of undergraduate students in the new normal era to identify significant components and suggest strategies for developing work skills in the new normal era. This will help pupils to acquire the necessary abilities in advance. It is also seen as preparation for joining the workforce.

The researcher identified the associations between groups of variables using the Interactionism model (Endler & Magnusson, 1977; Tett & Burnett, 2003; Walsh, Craik, & Price, 2000) as the primary conceptual framework. The effect path analysis data were utilized to identify significant variables accurately.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Skills for working in the new normal life

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## 2.2 Psychological trait group

It is a generally constant mental state that has accumulated from the past to the present and is unaffected by current conditions. This research investigated the relationship between four significant psychological qualities and work skills in the new normal life. The following are the specifics: Achievement motivation is the desire or desire to accomplish something to a high standard. They will not give up on overcoming hurdles and issues. There is satisfaction when achieving achievement but anxiety when failure happens (Hatayama, Viollaz, & Winkler, 2020).

Self-controlled future orientation refers to the capacity to anticipate the significance of future events. This involves exercising self-control and waiting for higher future rewards (Milon, Islam, & Khan, 2021). Self-evaluation entails self-awareness of one's worth, general self-efficacy awareness, belief in one's self-control power, and emotional stability. The individuals will recognize whether they like or loathe themselves. They will perceive themselves as competent or successful. There is a sensation of control or lack of control over one's environment and the ability to control one's emotions (Whelan, Golden, & Tarafdar, 2022).

Good mental health is a cheerful state of mind in which one has positive feelings for oneself and others, emotional maturity, the ability to adjust to any issues or changes, and the ability to function normally in society. Also, healthy mental health is crucial to living at any age (Cen et al., 2022).

### 2.3 Situational factors group

The individual's social environment enables, inhibits, and influences their thoughts and actions. This research consequently examined the relationships between the three essential situational features and work skills in the new normal life. On-campus education is education that takes place at a university. Academic learning, the growth of ideas and skills, and the modification of learning behaviors are influenced by experience, student contact, the interaction between teachers and students, involvement in university activities, and the university environment (Peng et al., 2022).

A role model inside the family signifies that students have observed close relatives who have become role models or models of behavior for imitation. Based on Bandura's social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 2000), which separates imitative learning into the following four processes: 1) Attentional processes, 2) Retention processes, 3) Production processes, and 4) Incentive and motivation, these features exist. The effect of peers and seniors refers to students' perceptions of the actions of peers and seniors on work skills in the new normal life. Students are encouraged to imitate their classmates and elders. The influence of peers and elders can transmit concepts and experiences (Alshebami & Aldhyani, 2022).

### 2.4 Psychological state group

It results from the interaction between a person's initial awareness and current circumstances. It is susceptible to change depending on the circumstances. Following are the results of an examination of two important variables. Attitude toward developing work skills in the new normal life relates to an individual's psychological characteristics. It results from a person's valuation knowledge. It is the knowledge that is extremely beneficial or destructive, resulting in sentiments of contentment or discontentment. This individual will be prepared to perform following one's

preferences. There are three components to attitudes toward behaviors: 1) cognitive aspect, 2) affective aspect, and 3) behavioral intention aspect.

Perception of the ability to regulate one's work skills in the new normal life includes evaluating one's ability to work at any level or an individual's beliefs on their power to affect life. Self-efficacy is built on feelings, ideas, motivation, and the capacity to build work abilities (Ajzen, 2002). Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework.

H1: *Psychological traits and situation group variables directly influence the group of work skills in the new normal life.*

H2: *Psychological trait and situation group variables have an indirect influence through the psychological state group to the group of work skills in the new normal life.*

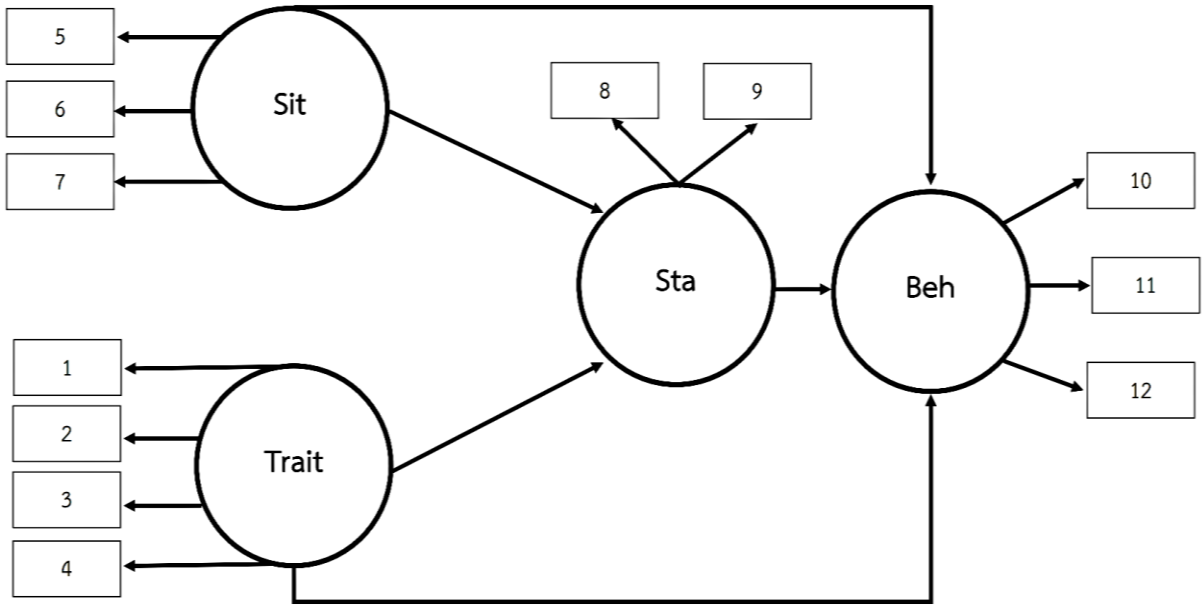


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

**Note** Sit: Situational factors, Trait: Psychological traits, Sta: Psychological states, Beh: work skills in the new normal life, 1: Achievement motivation, 2: Self-controlled future orientation, 3: Core assessment, 4: Good mental health, 5: On-campus learning, 6: Seeing role models from family, 7: Influence from peers and seniors, 8: Attitudes towards developing work skills in the new normal life, 9: Perception in the ability to control work skills, 10: Self-efficacy skills, 11: Skills for working with others, 12: Skills for social responsibility.

## 3. Methodology

This quantitative research was correlational, consisting of a comparative assessment of the relationship pattern between distinct variables and the strength of association between variables. Twelve sets of questions and one biosocial background characteristic were collected. To manage the difficulty of the response before or after each set, they were divided into two sets (Form A and Form B) with alternate measurement orders. Students are obliged to self-report.

The research sample consisted of undergraduate students. Due to the magnitude of the population, a multistage sampling technique was utilized to cover a wide variety of population sizes. The sampling variables were as follows: 1) type of university divided into 4 public universities and 4 private universities, 2) faculties divided into the random in the faculty of science, faculty of humanities, and faculty of business administration, 3) undergraduate students divided into the group of 1st-year students, the group of 2nd-year students, the group of 3rd-year students, and the group of 4th-year students, 4) a total of 25 students (8x2x2x25), which equals a sample size The information was gathered throughout the second and summer semesters of the school year 2021.

The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce has certified 12 measuring devices for ethical use on humans (Research Project Code: UTCCEC/Expedited003/2565). It is a form of evaluation scale comprised of multiple sentences. The rating ranges from "very accurate" to "not at all." 160 individuals used the collected data to determine the item's discrimination using the independent sample t-test. Using the 27% technique, the r Item–the total correlation was determined. Using confirmatory factor analysis, Tavakol and Dennick (2011) determined that the -coefficient for a construct-validity criterion-meeting question was sufficient to establish its validity (Shevlin & Miles, 1998). Using Path Analysis in conjunction with the Linear Structural Relationship Model (LISREL Model) with Latent Variables for hypothesis testing, it was determined that the hypothesized model is congruent with the empirical data.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this study, data were obtained from a total of 819 individuals. 789 questionnaires were selected based on their full responses to the independent and dependent variables. The biosocial features can be summarized as 436 females (55.30%) aged 20 years and 2 months on average. Most humanities students, 351 (44.5%), have a poor GPA (≤3.00). 406 persons (51.50%). 76.80% of the 606 pupils were siblings. Most of the 417 students lived with their parents or 52.90 percent.

Testing the linear correlation model between all variables (Figure 2) indicated that the model had a linear structural link and was compatible with the empirical data (Table 1 and Table 3). It appears that psychological state variables strongly influence working skills in the new normal life of undergraduate students. The effect coefficient was 0.803, which was also influenced directly by the circumstance variables. The effect coefficient was 0.797 and was influenced directly by psychological trait factors. The effect coefficient was 0.776. Internal variables exerted a direct influence on the psychological state variables. The coefficient of effect was 0.768, and the variable representing psychological features was also 0.768. The effect coefficient was 0.122. Hence, the psychological state is a connecting component directly affecting work skills in the new normal life.

The outcomes of this study support the first and second hypotheses and the interactionism theory model (Table 1 and Figure 2). It corresponds to a prior study examining the interactionism theory (Hwang & Lee, 2022). The psychological trait group's measuring model revealed that mental health was this group's most heavily weighted variable. The component weight was 0.932, indicating that the variable in the psychological trait group led by the mental health variable was an important variable affecting the development of students working skills in their new normal life.

This is consistent with previous research on excellent mental health conducted by Bryson et al. (2023). Mental wellness requires that students know and comprehend themselves optimally. Students can examine their strengths and specific abilities to be utilized accurately and responsibly. Students can learn to accept their flaws correctly to adapt to their surroundings. In addition, mental health entails being receptive to the viewpoints of others and emphasizing reason over emotion when listening. This result

was consistent with the finding of numerous regression analyses that mental health is a strong predictor of cooperative abilities in the new normal life (Li et al., 2022).

The scenario variable group's measurement model revealed that exposure to a family role model was the variable with the most weight in this group. The standard value of component weight was 0.720, showing that the family modeling variable was essential for preparing pupils for the new normal life. Consistent with past studies of this variable

Table 1. Estimated parameters and related statistics to verify the validity of the causal factor model of work skills in the new normal life of undergraduate students (N = 789)

| Cause and effect variables | Value of parameters | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Raw scores (b) | SE. | Standard scores (β) | t |
| **Situational factors (Sit)** | | | | |
| On-campus learning | 1.000 | 0.030 | 0.699 | 14.075*** |
| Seeing the role models from family | 1.381 | 0.042 | 0.720 | 15.996*** |
| Influence from friends and seniors | 0.384 | 0.011 | 0.258 | 14.810*** |
| **Psychological traits (Trait)** | | | | |
| Achievement motivation | 1.000 | 0.041 | 0.711 | 7.970*** |
| Self-controlled future orientation | 0.774 | 0.033 | 0.634 | 26.639*** |
| Self-evaluation | 0.982 | 0.050 | 0.760 | 16.074*** |
| Good mental health | 1.668 | 0.074 | 0.932 | 8.785*** |
| **Psychological states (Sta)** | | | | |
| Attitude towards the development of work skills in the new normal life | 1.000 | 0.037 | 0.150 | 16.137*** |
| Perception of the ability to control work skills in the new normal life | 6.605 | 1.067 | 0.134 | 19.890*** |
| **Skills for working in the new normal life (Beh)** | | | | |
| Skills within oneself | 1.000 | 0.026 | 0.625 | 25.783*** |
| Skills for working with others | 1.291 | 0.079 | 0.705 | 20.482*** |
| Social responsibility skills | 1.341 | 0.106 | 0.534 | 7.772*** |
| **Structural equation model** | | | | |
| Sit ⟶ Sta | 0.164 | 0.028 | 0.768 | 37.106*** |
| Trait ⟶ Sta | 0.085 | 0.018 | 0.122 | 12.544* |
| Sta ⟶ Beh | 0.651 | 0.133 | 0.803 | 15.228*** |
| Sit ⟶ Beh | 2.496 | 0.997 | 0.797 | 12.521* |
| Trait ⟶ Beh | 5.444 | 2.009 | 0.776 | 12.665* |

**Note** *p<.05, ***p<.001.

That is also compatible with Bandura's (2000) theory that children learn by observing the conduct of others. The majority of the time, kids learn by observing the role model as the model for new ways of thinking and acting. The data gathered from that observation will be stored in memory and utilized to guide the next expression. Comparing the significant predictors among the situational factors of the multiple regression analysis reveals that the on-campus learning variables are a more significant predictor than the variable of the family as a role model (Warfvinge et al., 2022).

For the psychological state variable group's measurement model, it was determined that the attitude toward gaining work skills in the new normal life was the variable with the greatest weight. The prediction coefficient ($R^2$) of the psychological state intrinsic structural equation was 0.964, and the standard component weight was 0.150. (Table 2). Consistent with the multiple regression analysis, this result was obtained. The determinants of attitude toward improving work skills in the new normal life were discovered. It is a significant indicator of cooperation abilities in the new normal life (Goss, 2022). It is also connected to Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, which discusses the attitude toward behavior, meaning that if students believe in the growth of work skills, it will make them more optimistic.

Table 2. Direct and indirect influences of psychological traits and psychological states on work skills in the new normal life of undergraduate students in the mixed group (N = 789)

| **Causal variables** | | **Effect variables within the model** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Psychological States** | | | **Skills for working** | | |
| | | **DE** | **IE** | **TE** | **DE** | **IE** | **TE** |
| Psychological States | b | ---- | ---- | ---- | 0.651 | ---- | ---- |
| | SE. | ---- | ---- | ---- | 0.133 | ---- | ---- |
| | β | ---- | ---- | ---- | 0.803 | ---- | ---- |
| Situational Factors | b | 0.164 | ---- | 0.164 | 2.496 | 3.850 | 0.553 |
| | SE. | 0.028 | ---- | 0.028 | 0.997 | 1.495 | 0.037 |
| | β | 0.768 | ---- | 0.768 | 0.997 | 0.588 | 0.553 |
| Psychological Traits | b | 0.085 | ---- | 0.085 | 0.651 | 0.070 | 0.720 |
| | SE. | 0.018 | ---- | 0.018 | 0.133 | 0.123 | 0.049 |
| | β | 0.122 | ---- | 0.122 | 0.803 | 0.086 | 0.889 |
| $R^2$ | | 0.964 | | | 0.464 | | |

**Note** b (raw score), SE. (Standard Error), β (Standard score), DE (Direct Effects), IE (Indirect Effects), TE (Total Effects).

Table 3. Model fit information

| Statistics | Criteria for consideration | Statistics in the model (Mixed group) |
|---|---|---|
| Without statistical significance | | $\chi^2$ = 30.412, df = 10, p-value = 0.1715 |
| RMSEA | ≤ .06 | 0.018 |
| CFI | ≥ .95 | 0.999 |
| TLI | ≥ .95 | 0.996 |
| SRMR | ≤ .08 | 0.018 |

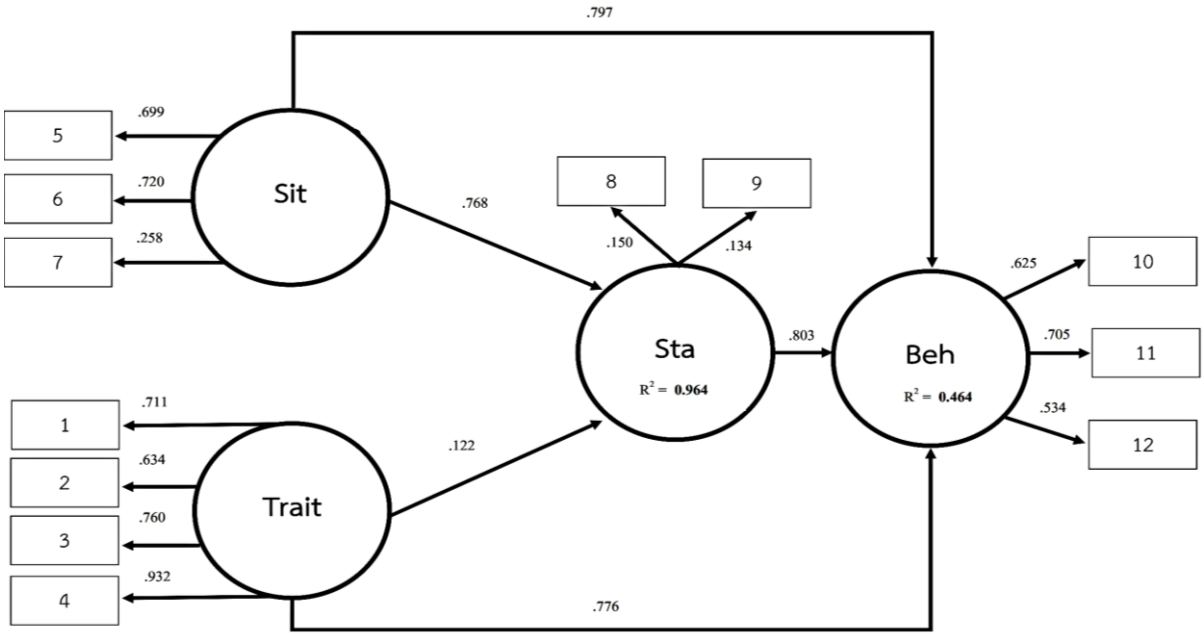


Figure 2. The harmonization test results

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By examining the measurement model of the variables of work skills in the new normal life of undergraduate students, it is evident that skills for working with others were variable with the greatest weighting for this group. The element's standard weight was 0.705, followed by self-efficacy. The standard value of the component

weight was 0.625, and the variable with the lowest component weight in this group was social responsibility skills. The normal weight of the component was 0.534. The prediction coefficient ($R^2$) of the intrinsic variable structural equation of work skills in undergraduates' new normal life was 0.464. (Table 2). This was consistent with previous studies (Zainal Badri et al., 2022).

The study in this section shows that students are most interested in developing their ability to collaborate with others. Most university instructors incorporate the development of social skills into group homework projects. This is designed to teach pupils how to cooperate and achieve a common objective. This form of activity will improve pupils' knowledge of their duties. Kids can experience being a follower and leaders by accepting responsibility for what has been allocated. Students can establish relationships with one another. They are capable of strengthening and supporting one another. They will be unified in their desire to share, their ability to fall together and move forward, and their appreciation of achievement and pride.

## 5. Conclusion

The study's results highlighted crucial characteristics that equip Thai undergraduates with work skills for the new normal life. The emphasis must be made on the development of the variables in the psychological trait group and the variables in the situational factor, such as the variable indicating excellent mental health and the variable indicating exposure to family role models. In addition, the coordination factors in the psychological state group should be developed according to the scenario. Variables of attitude regarding developing work skills in the new normal life. These three variables were the most connected and possessed the greatest component weight in each group. Subsequently, additional variables were established as necessary.

Regarding developing students' work skills in the new normal life, the students' attitudes toward self-improvement must be altered to reflect the opposing perspective. Nowadays, the entrepreneur has a greater right to choose a collaborator than an individual has. In general, entrepreneurs require pupils with knowledge and skills. They require employees with knowledge and competence in various vocations and exceptional, talented, morally upright individuals.

Most significantly, they require individuals who can collaborate with others. Certain abilities may involve learning procedures outside the classroom, such as internships, working outside school hours, group learning, learning by doing, and self-learning. Therefore, It is evident that university study alone is insufficient to improve work abilities. Kids must learn to practice independently in the most sustainable manner. This aligns with the notion of lifelong learning. Education institutes and government agencies must create awareness and promote good mental health for students to recognize their value, discipline development, self-reflection, assessment of one's mental health, and evaluation of the development of their skills to identify their weaknesses and strengths.

This will support the development of a lifelong learning process for pupils, allowing them to adapt to changing circumstances. The family institute must focus on providing positive role models for pupils, perhaps by highlighting behaviors associated with proper life skills and work-life balance. The students should be encouraged to participate in internships outside of class time. Even though it is not required in the university curriculum, they should be encouraged to work part-time to learn the work process with others and get experience at a young age. This can be tied to the use of academic knowledge gained and applied to actual work to adapt to the environment outside the institution.

For this research, the researcher further developed a set of work skills manuals and training courses to develop potential under the project "Prepare for entering the working age in the new normal life" for students to practice thinking and practicing about working styles, current working behaviors, and differences between past and future work. This will more effectively inspire pupils to prepare and cultivate a sense of self-improvement.

## 6. Implications and Limitations

Theoretically, this research can be modified to fit the circumstances of the pupils. In addition, the researcher constructs a new measure based on pertinent documents, which is then subjected to expert quality inspections and utilized to determine the Item discrimination, Item total correlation, and reliability. This

illustrates that the measurement equipment is dependable and may be developed continuously to improve the quality of standardized academic works. In addition, the research has provided new insights into the literature concerning students' work skills and their advancement in the working society. The findings of this research significantly advance the state of knowledge and highlight novel links supported by empirical evidence.

The comparative correlation analysis identified only the quantitative link between the variables. Hence this research has certain limitations. Although the original model was derived from the interactionism model and included a linear correlation analysis to study the predictors and the power of direct and indirect predictors of 3 groups of causal variables on 3 areas of behavior, no strong evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship between these variables was discovered. The further experimental investigation is required to confirm the conclusions of this prediction.

This study demonstrates the comparative relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Yet, it is still unable to tell whether these independent or examined variables are the true cause of the results. For instance, this research cannot determine if achievement motivation is the source and consequence of work skills in the new normal life. Occasionally, the new normal Life job skills may be the cause, and achievement drive may be the effect until an experimental study follows the principles correctly.

In addition, numerous variable types must be investigated for this research. Several measurement sets are utilized throughout the exam. The respondent takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes to respond, which may induce boredom. Because of this, the information obtained may be contradictory to reality. As a result, the researcher must employ a motivational technique to reduce the likelihood of such unfavorable outcomes, such as rewarding survey participants with Starbucks e-coupons and other mementos through a lucky draw to encourage the sample to answer all questions thoroughly.

Other than path analysis, which yields distinct results and obscures the big picture, a range of statistical analyses should provide a clearer picture of the situation. The multiple regression analysis will identify the significant elements, enabling the

drawing of findings that are specific enough to serve as the basis for future study and development. In addition, the instruments utilized in this study are a measurement derived from a domestic and worldwide high-standard measurements.

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