

THE INFLUENCE OF SOFT SKILLS, INTERESTS, AND MOTIVATION ON WORK READINESS AMONG GENERATION Z IN YOGYAKARTA



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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine how soft skills, interests, and motivation influence Generation Z's readiness to enter the workforce in Yogyakarta. The method used in this study is a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis. A sample of 100 respondents was obtained through random sampling. The data collection tool was a questionnaire analyzed using SPSS version 25. The research results showed that, partially, the three variables soft skills, interests, and motivation significantly influenced work readiness. Interest is the most dominant variable influencing work readiness, followed by motivation and soft skills. Meanwhile, simultaneously, all three variables were also found to significantly influence Generation Z's work readiness. However, the coefficient of determination was only 22.1%, indicating that there are other variables outside the scope of this study that also influence work readiness. These findings highlight the importance of developing non-academic aspects in education as preparation for the increasingly complex and competitive job market, especially in the digital age, which demands flexibility, creativity, and strong interpersonal skills from every job seeker.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Interests, Motivation, Work Readiness, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

The development of the world of work in the era of globalization and the 4.0 industrial revolution emphasizes human resources who are not only competent in technical matters (hard skills), but also possess non-technical skills (soft skills), appropriate work interests, and strong motivation. The world of work today faces rapid change, the digitization of work processes, and increasingly fierce global competition (Forum, 2020). Companies are now increasingly selective in recruiting employees, considering not only technical skills but also assessing knowledge, professional attitude, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, communication, and a strong work ethic as key factors in determining a person's readiness to enter the industry (Yusra & Azman, 2025). Thus, work readiness is a crucial indicator for assessing an individual's ability to adapt and compete in the professional world.

One of the personal factors that can pose a challenge for them during this transition period is work readiness (M. R. Putri & Hadi, 2023). Work readiness is a requirement of the workplace that encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor maturity, which must be systematically and strategically prepared to achieve optimal performance and collaboration (Setiawati & Mayasari, 2021). Work readiness (employability readiness) not only encompasses cognitive and academic aspects but also psychological, social, and emotional readiness, including communication skills, collaboration, time management, and leadership (Yorke, 2006). Job satisfaction, which is an employee's positive or negative attitude toward their work based on perception, has a significant impact on organizational life, where positive attitudes are often demonstrated by highly satisfied workers, while those with low satisfaction tend to have negative attitudes (Katili & Prasetyo, 2021).

In this case, soft skills play an important role in helping individuals face challenges in the workplace, especially in collaborative and dynamic environments (Robles, 2012). Soft skills are abilities that originate from within a person and are useful in both formal and informal contexts (Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah, 2024). According to (Purnama & Aprillyanda, 2022) soft skills, also known as emotional intelligence, play a vital role in determining an individual's success in the workplace. Therefore, enhancing an individual's competitiveness amid the growing complexity of workplace demands requires the development of soft skills from an early age.

In addition to soft skills, work interests are also an important aspect in shaping work readiness. Appropriate interests will make individuals more enthusiastic, focused, and resilient to pressure in carrying out their work (Sardiman, 2018). Work interest is an individual's attraction to a particular type of work that aligns with their field of expertise, thereby motivating them to strive to achieve their career goals optimally (Yusra & Azman, 2025). According to (Andina et al., 2023), work interest is an individual's internal drive to engage in an activity or job based on their experience and knowledge.

Similarly, motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is the main driver for a person to act, learn, and develop in their career (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Work motivation reflects the extent to which a person has the determination to enter the workforce and is one of the important characteristics seen in prospective employees when they are accepted into an industry (Andina et al., 2023). According to (Hafizhah, 2024), Generation Z has specific preferences in career orientation driven by the characteristics of a generation that is ambitious and excels in technical and language skills.

This condition is even more relevant when it comes to Generation Z, which is the generation born between 1997 and 2012. This generation, commonly referred to as the digital generation, excels in using technology and adapting to change. Although they excel in technical skills, their readiness for the workforce is also significantly influenced by their mastery of soft skills and religious attitudes (Mayroza Wiska et al., 2022). Generation Z was born amid rapid technological advancements, so for them, technology is not merely an innovation but an integral part of their lives.

The transition to the digital age can be likened to a double-edged sword: it has sharpness (Pertiwi et al., 2021), but it brings both positive and negative impacts. Nevertheless, many individuals still face a gap between what is taught in educational institutions and the demands of the workplace, particularly in terms of soft skills and work motivation (A. D. Putri & Nurhadi, 2022). One strategic opportunity that can be leveraged is the ease of learning and development for students. However, on the other hand, the digital age also presents challenges, as it can have negative consequences if not used carefully. These challenges must be addressed in preparing for the workforce in the digital age (Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah, 2024).

In Indonesia, particularly in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which is known as a student city, this issue has also come to the fore. Many young graduates are not fully prepared to enter the workforce, mainly due to their lack of soft skills and weak work motivation. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for educational and training institutions to place greater emphasis on developing non-academic aspects that support the employability of the younger generation.



Source: Central Statistics Agency of Yogyakarta Province

According to data from the National Labour Force Survey (Sakernas) obtained by the Special Region of Yogyakarta Provincial Statistics Agency, the Special Region of Yogyakarta had an unemployment rate of 3.48 percent in August 2024. Compared to the unemployment rate of 3.69 percent in August 2023, this figure is lower (a decrease of 0.21 percentage points). This situation indicates an improving labour market in the Special Region of Yogyakarta as the economy recovers post-COVID-19 pandemic (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024).

Previous research has shown that the employability of young people is influenced by various factors, one of which is soft skills. For example, research by (Rahmadani & Mardalis, 2022) shows that learning motivation and educational environment contribute to improving employability, although it does not directly link this to individual interest in the world of

work. Meanwhile, research conducted by (Vujović & Tripković, 2023) indicates that Generation Z's work readiness still faces challenges, particularly in terms of aligning their skills with industry needs. However, the focus of this research is more on the role of technology and online learning systems, rather than psychological aspects such as interest and internal motivation.

Based on the results of previous studies, it can be concluded that research on work readiness has been conducted extensively, but it has primarily focused on individual variables and has not yet addressed the interplay between the three variables simultaneously. Therefore, this study offers novelty by comprehensively examining the influence of soft skills, interests, and motivation on work readiness among Generation Z in Yogyakarta. This study also focuses on Generation Z as the primary subject due to their unique characteristics and challenges in the modern workplace, while also considering the context of Yogyakarta as an educational hub that produces thousands of young job seekers each year. With this approach, it is hoped that this study will contribute both scientifically and practically to efforts to enhance the work readiness of young people in Indonesia.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Soft Skills

Soft skills are non-technical abilities that refer to interpersonal interactions carried out by individuals and managing their tasks. These skills include communication, leadership, time management, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities (Syah & Pujiyanto, 2024). Soft skills are technical and intellectual abilities that emphasise intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, such as public speaking and emotional control in the workplace (Setiawati & Mayasari, 2021). In sociological research, emotional intelligence (EQ), often referred to as soft skills, is a critical component in evaluating an individual's ability to collaborate, solve problems, and provide inspiration or solutions in the workplace (Ratuela et al., 2022). Indicators for measuring soft skills include: (1) communication skills, (2) problem-solving ability, (3) ethics, (4) leadership skills, and (5) emotional intelligence (Sharma, 2011).

Interest

According to (Gohae, 2020), work interest is a condition in which an individual determines their level of participation in an activity. Work interest is the relationship between an individual and external factors that influence the motivation to work, where a decline in interest can hinder the ability to produce optimal performance (Hasanuddin & Ashari, 2020). Meanwhile according to (Dalyono, 2014), strong interest is a key asset in achieving desired goals or targets. Although interest is related to behaviour, its dynamic nature allows for changes over time (Ahmad & Pambudi, 2013). Indicators of work interest include attention, enjoyment, desire, and willingness (Hartono, 2014).

Motivation

Motivation is the enthusiasm that arises from an individual's internal drive to take action and achieve something based on their hopes, goals, or aspirations (Anoraga, 2014). According to (Uno, 2017), motivation is an internal spark that drives someone to change a situation they believe will become better. Work motivation is the drive from internal and

external factors that encourage someone to change and improve their performance and productivity (Andina et al., 2023). Motivation indicators according to (Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah, 2024) include 1) hopes and aspirations as goals to be achieved, 2) environmental pressures such as family economic pressures, 3) desires and interests to enter the workforce according to one's abilities, and 4) physiological needs such as food, clothing, and shelter.

Work Readiness

Work readiness according to (Sari & Manunggal, 2023), is a combination of knowledge, skills, and mindset that supports new graduates to contribute positively in the workplace. Meanwhile (Datadiwa & Widodo, 2015) states that work readiness encompasses an individual's overall readiness, including willingness, ability, and physical, mental, and experiential maturity. According to (Jafar & Wahyuni, 2016), work readiness is related to individual characteristics, such as work attitude and the physical endurance required to seek and maintain employment. The indicators of work readiness according to (Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah, 2024) include 1) responsibility, 2) critical thinking, 3) the ability to integrate with the environment, and 4) ambition to continue learning and honing skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative approach was used in this study to systematically collect data on the views, psychological characteristics, opinions, characteristics, and relationships between variables of the sample under study in order to test the hypothesis, as explained by (Sugiyono, 2017). This research uses data collection techniques involving the distribution of questionnaires and literature review. In this case, the research population is Generation Z in Yogyakarta. The sampling technique used is Random Sampling or Probability Sampling, a technique used to ensure that there is no difference in opportunity among population members in the sample selection process, so that samples are selected randomly to avoid bias in sample selection. The Lemeshow formula was used to determine that the sample size for this research is 100 respondents, with a maximum estimate of 5% and a maximum error rate of 10%. Based on (Riyanto & Hatmawan, 2020) the sample calculation using the Lemeshow formula can be applied to determine the sample size when the total population cannot be precisely determined. The response options for each variable use a Likert scale from 1 to 5. To determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, the data is then analysed using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis with SPSS 25 software.

Research Hypothesis

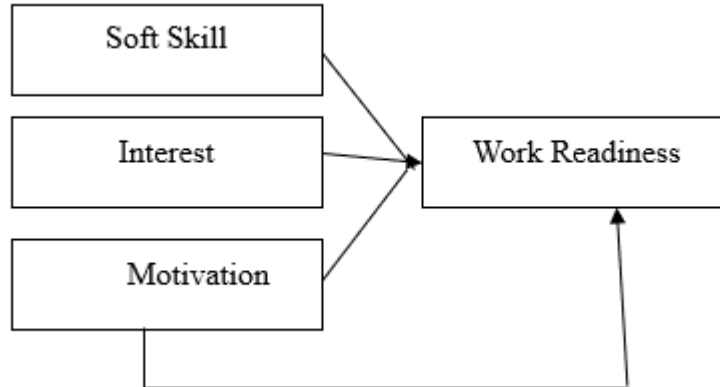
This study aims to analyze the influence soft skills, interests, and motivation on work readiness. Based on the review of the literature and previous research, the hypothesis proposed in this study is as follows:

- H1: Soft skills has a positive and significant effect on work readiness among generation Z in Yogyakarta.
- H2: Interests has a positive and significant effect on work readiness among generation Z in Yogyakarta.
- H3: Motivation has a positive and significant effect on work readiness among generation Z in Yogyakarta.
- H4: Soft skills has a positive and significant effect simultaneously have a significant

effect on work readiness among Generation Z in Yogyakarta.

Research Model

This research model describes the relationship between independent variables (soft skills, interests, and motivation) to dependent variables (work readiness). This model can be illustrated as follows:



The image of the model of this study shows that the three independent variables—soft skills, interests, and motivation have a direct relationship with work readiness, which will be tested through multiple linear regression analysis. This study employs a quantitative approach with a survey method, where data is collected using a questionnaire based on a Likert scale. The data analysis technique used is linear regression analysis to examine the influence of each variable on work readiness. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insights for educational institutions, career development programs, and policymakers in Yogyakarta in enhancing Generation Z’s work readiness by focusing on strengthening soft skills, nurturing personal interests, and increasing motivation toward career goals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the 100 respondents in this study were women (63 people, or 63%), while 37 people (37%) were men. With a percentage of 71%, most respondents were between 19 and 23 years old, indicating that they were young and enthusiastic. Additionally, 26% of respondents were in the 24–28 age range, while only 3% were aged 13–18.

In terms of educational background, 62 respondents, or 62% of the sample, were high school or vocational school graduates. Only 5% of respondents had a diploma, compared to 33 respondents, or 33% of the total, who had a bachelor's degree. In terms of work experience, 59 respondents, or 59% of the sample, had worked for more than one year, while 41 respondents, or 41% of the sample, had less than one year of work experience. Based on this data, the educational background and professional experience of the respondents were quite diverse, which could provide a variety of perspectives in this study.

Instrument Testing

Validity Test

A questionnaire instrument is considered to meet the validity requirements if the calculated r exceeds the table r corresponding to the sig level and the number of respondents (Ghozali, 2011).

Table 1.
Validity Test

	Item	R Calculate	R Table	Description
Soft Skills (X1)	SS1	0.694	0.195	Valid
	SS2	0.758	0.195	Valid
	SS3	0.771	0.195	Valid
	SS4	0.685	0.195	Valid
	SS5	0.770	0.195	Valid
	SS6	0.643	0.195	Valid
Interest (X2)	INT1	0.834	0.195	Valid
	INT 2	0.785	0.195	Valid
	INT3	0.810	0.195	Valid
	INT4	0.793	0.195	Valid
	INT5	0.776	0.195	Valid
	INT6	0.776	0.195	Valid
	INT7	0.874	0.195	Valid
	INT8	0.842	0.195	Valid
Motivation (X3)	MOTIVATION1	0.696	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION2	0.700	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION3	0.756	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION4	0.720	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION5	0.614	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION6	0.667	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION7	0.756	0.195	Valid
	MOTIVATION8	0.696	0.195	Valid
Work Readiness (Y)	KK1	0.578	0.195	Valid
	KK2	0.808	0.195	Valid
	KK3	0.746	0.195	Valid
	KK4	0.805	0.195	Valid
	KK5	0.679	0.195	Valid
	KK6	0.731	0.195	Valid
	KK7	0.764	0.195	Valid
	KK8	0.710	0.195	Valid

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

Based on the above results, it can be said that all research items are valid because the calculated r value exceeds the table r value.

Reliability Test

A questionnaire is considered reliable or has a good level of reliability if the Cronbach's Alpha (α) value obtained is ≥ 0.6 (Ghozali, 2011).

Table 2.
Reliability Test

No	Variabel	Croanbach's Alpha	Minimum Croanbach's Value	Description
1	Soft Skills	0.810	0.60	Reliabel
2	Interest	0.925	0.60	Reliabel
3	Motivation	0.838	0.60	Reliabel
4	Work Readiness	0.871	0.60	Reliabel

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

Based on the above results, it can be stated that all research items are reliable because each Cronbach's Alpha value for the research items is greater than 0.60.

Classical Assumption Test
Normality

The purpose of the normality test is to identify the suitability of the data distribution with the normal distribution in a study (Wijaya & Prasetyo, 2023). In this study, decisions are based on the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value, where if the value exceeds 0.05, the residuals are considered to be normally distributed.

Table 3.
Normality Test

Unstandardized Residual	
N	100
Test Statistic	.047
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.200 ^{e,d}

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

From the above results, the asym.sig (2-tailed) value is 0.200, which exceeds 0.05, so this research can be said to be normally distributed.

Multicollinearity Test

According to (Ghozali, 2021), multicollinearity testing is conducted to determine whether there is a linear relationship between independent variables. Multicollinearity is detected if the tolerance value is < 0.10 or $VIF > 10$.

Table 4.
Multicollinearity Test

Variabel	Tolerance	VIF	Conclusion
Soft Skills	.673	1.487	Avoiding multicollinearity
Interest	.653	1.531	Avoiding multicollinearity
Motivation	.676	1.480	Avoiding multicollinearity

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

The results concluded that all items in this research, namely soft skills, interest, and motivation, had tolerance values exceeding 0.10 and VIF values less than 10, which means that multicollinearity was avoided.

Heteroscedasticity Test

According to (Ghozali, 2021), the heteroscedasticity test is used to detect differences in residual variance in regression models. Heteroscedasticity occurs when the significance value is < 0.05.

Table 5.
Heteroscedasticity Test

Variabel	Sig.	Conclusion
Soft Skills	.288	avoided heteroscedasticity
Interest	.087	avoided heteroscedasticity
Motivation	.336	avoided heteroscedasticity

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

From the results in the table above, it can be concluded that the research items, namely soft skills $0.288 > 0.05$, interest $0.087 > 0.05$, and motivation $0.336 > 0.05$, are free from heteroscedasticity.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A statistical technique for determining the extent to which independent factors simultaneously affect the dependent variable is multiple linear regression analysis (Ghozali, 2021). The following formula is applied:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + e.....(1)$$

Table 6.
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig
1	Constanta	7.446	3.319		2.372	0.020
	Soft Skills	0.216	0.104	0.193	2.085	0.040
	Interest	0.381	0.090	0.398	4.250	0.000
	Motivation	0.226	0.096	0.218	2.362	0.020

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

The multiple linear regression equation in this study is:

$$Y = 7.446 + 0.216X_1 + 0.381X_2 + 0.226X_3.....(2)$$

T Test

The t-test is used to determine the partial effect of independent variables on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2021). A significant effect is indicated if the p-value < 0.05 or the t-value exceeds the t-table.

Table 7.
T Test

Model	Coefficients ^a		
	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig
1	(Constant)	2.372	0.020
	Soft Skills	0.193	2.085
	Interest	0.398	4.250
	Motivation	0.218	2.362

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

The t-test shows that soft skills, interest, and motivation have a significant partial effect on the dependent variable. Soft skills have a t-value of 2.085 with a significance level of 0.040, interest has a t-value of 4.250 with a significance level of 0.000, and motivation has a t-value of 2.362 with a significance level of 0.020. Thus, all independent variables in this study were found to have a partial effect on the dependent variable.

Simultaneous Test (F Test)

According to (Ghozali, 2021), the F-test is used to examine the simultaneous effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. A significant effect is indicated if the p-value < 0.05 or the F-value exceeds the F-table.

Table 8.
Simultaneous Test (F Test)
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	460.407	3	153.469	26.102	.000 ^b
	Residual	564.433	96	5.880		
	Total	1024.840	99			

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

Based on the ANOVA table, the F test results show a calculated F value of 26.102 and a Sig. value of 0.000. It can be concluded that the regression model used in this study is simultaneously significant because the significance value is much smaller than 0.05. This indicates that the variance of the dependent variable can be explained by all three factors together.

Coefficient Of Determination (R²)

According to (Ghozali, 2021), the coefficient of determination (R²) indicates how well the independent variables explain the variation in the dependent variable. The value ranges from 0 to 1; the closer to 1, the better the model.

Table 9.
Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Model Summary^b				
Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error of Estimation
1	0.470 ^a	0.221	0.198	1.28092

Source: SPSS Output Results, 2025

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that the independent variable influences 0.221 or 22.1% on the dependent variable. The remainder comes from other variables outside the scope of this study.

The Influence of Soft Skills on Work Readiness

The results above indicate that soft skills significantly influence work readiness. This means that the better an individual's soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork, and time management, the higher their level of work readiness. This indicates that non-technical aspects also play an important role in preparing someone to enter the workforce. This aligns with research by (Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah, 2024), (Raihan & Nengsih, 2024) and (Setiawati & Mayasari, 2021), which states that soft skills have a significant impact on job readiness. Individuals with good soft skills tend to be more adaptable, have collaborative abilities, and take initiative in completing tasks, which are important characteristics in the professional workplace. Therefore, the development of soft skills should be a priority in educational and vocational training processes as part of a strategy to enhance the job readiness of graduates or job seekers. However, this differs from the findings of (Yusra & Azman, 2025) who state that soft skills do not influence job readiness. This discrepancy may arise because individuals have not fully understood or applied these skills in a real professional context.

The Influence of Interest on Work Readiness

This study demonstrates that interest significantly influences an individual's level of work readiness. These findings align with research by (Yusra & Azman, 2025), (Astuti et al., 2023) and (Andina et al., 2023), which state that work interest influences work readiness. This is because there is a sense of motivation driving individuals to realise their aspirations by preparing themselves optimally for the workplace through various efforts and actions undertaken to the fullest extent. The higher an individual's interest in the workplace, the greater the motivation to prepare themselves optimally, both in terms of knowledge, skills, and work attitude. Strong interest makes an individual more motivated to seek experiences, participate in training, or expand their knowledge, thereby becoming better prepared to face the challenges and demands of the competitive and dynamic workplace.

The Influence of Motivation on Work Readiness

Motivation influences the work readiness of Generation Z. This research aligns with studies by (Maulidiyah & Ubaidillah, 2024), (M. R. Putri & Hadi, 2023) and (Andina et al., 2023), which state that motivation has a significant influence on work readiness. This indicates that motivation has a significant partial influence on work readiness. In other words, the higher an individual's motivation, the greater their readiness to face the workplace. Motivation drives individuals to set goals, work hard, and maintain enthusiasm in facing

various challenges that may arise in the workplace. Individuals with high motivation tend to be more active in seeking opportunities, improving their competencies, and developing a professional attitude, making them more mentally and skillfully prepared. Thus, motivation is one of the important factors influencing work readiness because it acts as an internal driver that motivates someone to develop and adapt optimally. However, on the other hand (Hafizhah, 2024) in her research states that motivation does not influence work readiness, possibly because this internal drive has not been translated into concrete actions that support such readiness.

The Influence of Soft Skills, Interest, and Motivation on Work Readiness

Based on the results of the F-test, it was shown that the variables of soft skills, interest, and motivation simultaneously have a significant influence on the work readiness of Generation Z in Yogyakarta. This means that these three variables, when combined, can provide a meaningful contribution in explaining an individual's level of readiness to enter the workforce. Soft skills help individuals adapt and collaborate in professional environments, interest drives active engagement in preparing oneself, and motivation serves as an internal driver to achieve career goals. This finding reinforces that work readiness does not solely depend on academic or technical aspects but also on psychological and behavioural factors that are personally developed.

CONCLUSION

The results of the above research show that the higher an individual's soft skills, interest in the world of work, and motivation, the greater their readiness to face the challenges of the world of work. Interest has proven to be the most dominant variable, as a strong interest in the workplace drives individuals to actively prepare themselves. Motivation also plays a crucial role as an internal driver that motivates individuals to set career goals and enhance their competencies. Meanwhile, soft skills also support work readiness, particularly in terms of communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Simultaneously, these three variables significantly contribute to explaining work readiness, although their influence is only 22.1%, meaning other factors outside this model also influence the work readiness of Generation Z. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions place greater emphasis on developing soft skills, interests, and motivation through activities relevant to the workplace. Further research could include additional variables and expand the geographical scope to yield more comprehensive results.

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