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WORK READINESS SKILLS AND CAREER SELF-EFFICACY: A CASE OF MALAYSIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Universities need to acquire greater awareness of employers' current requirements to enable the curriculum to include industry engagement and work readiness skills. Soft skills are particular abilities that can improve one's employment performance and career prospects. These soft skills help students to develop their employability skills and make them confident to work in a performance oriented work environment as a critical lifelong learner. This study is conducted to determine the relationship between work readiness skills and career self-efficacy among final year business undergraduates in private universities in Malaysia. This study is based on questionnaires distributed to a sample of 285 respondents in UNITEN (Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Campus) and MMU (Melaka Campus). This finding shows that, there is a significant relationship between all variables proposed. The findings also indicate that the measurement is fit, as it meets the entire criterion for convergent validity, discriminant validity, as well as reliability. Future researchers are encouraged to include new variables and mediating variables in the research model. The research study provides necessary information on the issues of work readiness skills and career self-efficacy. Thus, it will be beneficial to the education industry and relevant parties such as other researchers to review and use this information for their future research.

Keywords: Work readiness skills, career self-efficacy, undergraduates, private universities.

1. Introduction

The job market today is a dynamic and challenging place for young people graduating from various educational institutions. The job opportunities are more for graduates who possess employable skills that are expected at workplaces. Only about 30% of the candidates who appear for interviews are selected. This is because they lack proficiency in English and the employable skills necessary for professionals today. The need to equip graduating students with the skills essential for the workplace has become an urgent concern (Nisha & Rajasekaran, 2018). Work readiness is the degree to which graduates possess the traits and attributes that prepare them for achievement in the workplace. Nowadays¸ employers are more concerned in discovering representative who has essential scholastic abilities as well as higher request thinking aptitudes and skills (Smith et al., 2014; Walker & Campbell, 2013).

In the work readiness skills, they have people qualities and people skills, professional knowledge and skills, and technology knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, studies found graduate work readiness have detailed that businesses locate that a few graduates are not work prepared, especially in ranges of individual and social abilities not really instructed inside a university setting (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). For long-term success, employers expect graduates to possess a diverse range of skills and attributes beyond discipline-specific competencies, such as problem solving, communication, teamwork, and innovation (Caballero et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2015).

The phrase 'trouble' maybe too harsh to use to describe the trouble at present but when left untreated, this 'unemployable' graduate syndrome can probably derail the federal government's push towards a high income nation. The World Bank's Malaysia Economic Monitor published in December 2013 stated that unemployment peaked amongst young degree holders. In 2014, the World Bank's Malaysia Economic Monitor again highlighted the Ministry of Higher Education 2013 statistics that out of 220,527 graduates in 2012, 25.6% had not secured a job six months after graduation. In 2015, 227,421 of graduates leaving university (both public and private), polytechnics and community colleges, 75.1% were able to find employment within six months of completing their studies. The graduate employability (GE) numbers expanded to 76.1% as of May 2016.

Attitude greatly affects the success rate. Robert Hall International, a consulting firm in San Francisco, asked the vice presidents and directors of human resources of the 100 largest companies in America to mention one of the main reasons they dismiss an employee. It turns out that the main reason they fired an employee is not competent (30%), inability to cooperate with other employees (17%), dishonesty or lying (12%), negative attitude (10%), lack of motivation (7%), failure or refuse to follow orders (7%) and other reasons (8%). Although the highest percentage is a matter of competence, but the problem of the reasons for the dismissal by the company is the attitude issues or lack in skills, qualities and professionalism among graduates.

2. Problem Statement

This research is conducted to determine the relationship between work readiness skills and career self-efficacy among final year business undergraduates in private universities in Malaysia. Work readiness is the degree to which graduates possess the characteristics and attributes that prepare them for success in

the workplace. Nevertheless, studies examining graduate work readiness have reported that employers find that some graduates are not work ready, particularly in areas of personal and relational competencies-skills not necessarily taught within a university setting (Walker et al., 2015). Recent research has highlighted that employers are placing increasing value on graduates being work ready. Work readiness is believed to be indicative of graduate potential in terms of long term job performance and career advancement. A review of the literature has found that current graduate recruitment and selection practices lack the rigour and construct validity to effectively assess work readiness. In addition, the variety of interchangeable terms and definitions articulated by employers and academics on what constitutes work readiness suggests the need to further refine this construct (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Furthermore, Eley (2010) explored work readiness among 20 medical interns from Queensland Australia and reported that most interns did not perceive themselves work ready at the commencement of their intern year. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between work readiness skills and career self-efficacy among final year business undergraduates in UNITEN and MMU.

3. Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:
• What is the relationship between work readiness skills towards career self-efficacy?
• What is the relationship between people qualities and people skills towards career self-efficacy?
•What is the relationship between professional knowledge and skills towards career self-efficacy?
•What is the relationship between technological knowledge and skills towards career self-efficacy?

4. Purpose of the Study

Purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between work readiness skills and career self-efficacy among final year business undergraduates in UNITEN (Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Campus) and MMU (Melaka Campus).

4.1. Work Readiness Skills

Work readiness is the measure to which graduates possess the characteristics and qualities that prepare them for success within the workplace (Caballero & Walker, 2010). In distinct, it is suggestive of profession advancement talents, role efficiency, and job success (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Similarly, work readiness has referred as "work preparedness," "generic attributes," and "graduate employability" (Casner Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Caballero et al., 2011). Work readiness skills can be complex to define as stakeholders tend to perceive and attribute value differently when it comes to the graduate capabilities and their employability skills (Bridgstock, 2009).

4.2. Career Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) stated that self-efficacy people set high objectives for themselves and persist endure in the practices important to accomplish these objectives. Career self-efficacy or efficacy in the profession space has been utilized to predict people's trust in their abilities to finish specific career-related, such as

composing a resume or conducting a job search (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Bandura (1977) initially proposed the construct of self-efficacy, his term for the conviction people have in their ability to complete goals and tasks based on experience.

4.3. Hypothesis Development

- Work Readiness Skills towards Self-Efficacy

According to Raftapoulous et al. (2009) stated that employers and graduates should have compromise with admiration to work readiness skills on self-control, certainty, administration, numeracy abilities and critical thinking aptitudes. Employability is link with self-efficacy, the individual's self-possessed in their capabilities for getting employment (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2012). Therefore, business graduates who have employability skills that are flexible, permitting them to work in shifted workplaces are significant in today's workplace.

- People Quality and People Skills towards Self-Efficacy

Based on the previous study, the relationship between people quality and people skills towards self-efficacy regarding their ability and results of operations of the behaviour prediction is true as academic achievement and vocational choices. Efficacy has also been associated with primary motivation building as a symbol of the cause, self-concept, confidence and achievement goal orientation (Krish, 2011).

- Professional Knowledge and Skills towards Self-Efficacy

From the previous study, Lauder et al. (2008) reported that self-efficacy impacts affected academic inspiration, learning, ability improvement, professional conduct, and occupation advance in nursing students. Desimone (2009) professional development conceptual framework shows that the program not only increased teachers' content knowledge and self-efficacy. Self-perceptions affect the attitudes and the instructional decisions they make in meeting the diverse needs of their students (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002).

- Technological Knowledge and Skills towards Self-Efficacy

According to Irvin (2007) stated that student's perceptions of computer technology skills were advanced due to the relations with the internet and concluded that integrating technology with learning specific computer software applications developed the feature of computer skills. Furthermore, workforce readiness includes communication skills, competencies in emerging technologies, and critical thinking skills.

Based on the literature above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between work readiness skills towards self-efficacy.

H2: There is a significant relationship between people quality and people skills towards self-efficacy.

H3: There is a significant relationship between professional knowledge and skills towards self-efficacy.

H4: There is a significant relationship between technological knowledge and skills towards self-efficacy.

5. Research Methods

This study is a quantitative study and data gathered by using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire with a five-point likert rating scale, ranging from "1 strongly disagree" to "5 strongly agree" questionnaire. Stratified random sampling technique is used to select the respondents for this research. The population for this research is the final year business undergraduates in top private universities in Malaysia (UNITEN and MMU). The population of final year business undergraduates in UNITEN (Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Campus) is 385 students, and 750 students from MMU (Melaka Campus). The total population from both universities is 1,135 students. Therefore, the required sample size is 285 according to (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). UNITEN and MMU are chosen due to these private universities are from the highest ranking in Malaysia. Data is analysed using Partial Least Square Structural Model (PLS-SEM) approach. Two stage procedure by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) were used, where (1) measurement model is analyses to test the validity and reliability and (2) structural model is analyses (Hair et al., 2017; Ramayah et al., 2013). IBM SPSS version 23 is also used in order to analyse the descriptive analysis of the respondents.

6. Findings

6.1. Demographic

From the data gathered, it can be summarized that majority of the respondents are from 20 to 25 years old. Mostly female (67%) while 33% are male. The respondents are mostly made up of Malays (42.8%), followed by Chinese (41.1%), Indian (13%) and others (3.2%). Table 01 below summarizes the respondent profile.

Table 01. Respondent Profile

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-25	265	93.0
	26-30	20	7.0
Gender	Male	94	33.0
	Female	191	67.0
Race	Malay	122	42.8
	Chinese	117	41.1
	Indian	37	13.0
	Others	9	3.2

6.2. Measurement Model Analysis

To evaluate the measuring model, the reliability and validity of the latent variables must be tested to complete the structural model examination. The reliability of the measures in this study is assessed using internal consistency analysis and indicators. Convergent validity and discriminatory validity analyzes of the measurement model for this study are evaluated using the procedures recommended by Chin (2010).

For reliability, internal consistency reliability was the first criteria to be assessed. The measurement model has sufficient internal consistency reliability when each variable's composite reliability (CR) surpasses the threshold value of 0.6. Table 02 shows that each variable's CR ranges from 0.904 to 0.881 for this study and is above the recommended threshold value of 0.6. The results show, therefore, that the elements used to represent the variables have satisfactory internal consistency reliability.

Next is validity, it is done by analyzing both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity can be evaluated via the average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2006). This criterion is described as the great mean value of the squared loading of the construct. As shown in Table 02 AVE results range from 0.471 to 0.540, some AVE results are less than 0.5, but all AVE values are accepted as defined. According to Fornell and Cha (1994) if AVE is less than 0.5, but composite reliability is higher than 0.6, the convergent validity of the construct is still acceptable. Thus, the results proved that convergent validity (AVE) exist for the constructs of this study.

Next, the discriminant validity in this study is assessed through Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT is the mean of all correlations of indicators across constructs measuring different constructs. Henseler et al. (2015) suggest that a lack of discriminatory validity of HTMT values above 0.90. When the path model constructs are conceptually more distinct, a lower and therefore more conservative threshold value of 0.85 appears to be warranted (Henseler et al., 2015). Hence Table 03 indicate HTMT discriminatory validity, all values are less than HTMT 's critical value (0.90) which means that discriminatory validity is not a problem.

Table 02. Reliability and Validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Work Readiness Skills	wrs_2	0.728	0.881	0.516
	wrs_3	0.738		
	wrs_4	0.655		
	wrs_5	0.759		
	wrs_6	0.782		
	wrs_7	0.677		
	wrs_8	0.678		
People Qualities and People Skills	pqps_1	0.759	0.858	0.502
	pqps_2	0.738		
	pqps_3	0.649		
	pqps_4	0.681		
	pqps_9	0.730		
	pqps_10	0.686		

Professional Knowledge and Skills	pks_1	0.652	0.904	0.511
	pks_2	0.729		
	pks_3	0.716		
	pks_5	0.706		
	pks_6	0.72		
	pks_7	0.689		
	pks_8	0.76		
	pks_9	0.755		
	pks_10	0.702		
Technology Knowledge and Skills	tks_2	0.749	0.904	0.540
	tks_3	0.759		
	tks_4	0.742		
	tks_5	0.748		
	tks_6	0.741		
	tks_7	0.745		
	tks_8	0.702		
	tks_10	0.688		
Career Self-Efficacy	cse_1	0.650	0.861	0.471
	cse_2	0.739		
	cse_3	0.735		
	cse_6	0.606		
	cse_8	0.638		
	cse_9	0.701		
	cse_10	0.720		

Note: CR= Composite reliability, AVE= Average variance extracted

Table 03. Discriminant Validity - Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

	Career Self-Efficacy	People Qualities and Skills	Professional Knowledge and Skill	Technology Knowledge and Skill	Work Readiness Skill
Career Self-Efficacy					
People Qualities and Skills	0.795				
Professional Knowledge and Skill	0.796	0.876			
Technology Knowledge and Skill	0.755	0.748	0.766		
Work Readiness Skill	0.820	0.824	0.829	0.691	

6.3. Structural Measurement Model Analysis

The structural model or path analysis is the subsequent major stage in SEM analysis after the measurement has been validated. The structural model is employed to measure the interactions between research variables. The structural model explains relationships between all variables. It illustrates the specific effects information between independent and dependent variables Hair et al. (2006), and Ho (2006). Bootstrapping is used specifically to obtain the meaning of the path coefficients through t-statistics (Ringle et al., 2005). Figure 1 below shows the structural model.

Four hypotheses were generated for this study (Hypothesis 1 – Hypothesis 4). From Table 04 below, for Hypothesis 1, the result shows that there is a significant relationship with t-value 4.890**, the result is supported by previous study. According to Mason et al. (2009) work readiness is the control of skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will allow fresh graduates to effectively contribute towards the achievement of the organization's objectives. Employability is also related with self-efficacy, the individual's self-confidence in their competences for obtaining employment (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2012). Raftapoulous et al. (2009) asserted that employers and graduates should have compromise regarding work readiness skills on self-discipline, leadership, numeracy skills, problem solving skills, and be self-confidence which is self-efficacy. Research by Makki et al. (2015) showed a a significant relationship between variables.

Next, Hypothesis 2 the result shows that there is a significant relationship between people qualities and skills and career self-efficacy with t-value 2.862**. This result is supported with previous study by Krish (2011) who stated that efficacy is associated with primary motivation building as a symbol of the cause, self-concept, confidence, achievement goal orientation, help find academic concerns and values.

For hypothesis 3, the result of this study shows that, there is a significant relationship between professional knowledge and skills towards career self-efficacy with, t-value 2.708**. The result is supported by Culpin and Scott (2012), Digabriele (2008), Lee and Blaszczynski (1999) and et al. (1994), who aptitudes that graduates must have are personal abilities, relational aptitudes, consciousness of morals, critical thinking, basic leadership, basic considering, logical aptitudes, cooperation, constant learning, self-inspiration, adaptability, and time administration.

Lastly, for hypothesis 4, the result of this study shows that, there is a significant relationship between technology knowledge and skills towards career self-efficacy with t-value 3.811**. This is similar with previous study by Cory and Pruske (2012) and Stoner (2009). Shah et al. (2012) stated that employees cooperating with information technology (IT) applications experience a situation that is referred to as computer anxiety (CA) or techno-stress. The computer anxiety has a consequence on the performance of the worker. In addition, computer anxiety has affected cooperative extension people and employees within the business world (Miller, 2010).

Table 04. Bootstrapping Result

	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Value	Decision
H1	work readiness skills -> career self-efficacy	0.299	0.299	0.061	4.890**	Accepted
H2	people qualities and skills -> career self-efficacy	0.162	0.166	0.057	2.862**	Accepted
H3	professional knowledge and skill -> career self-efficacy	0.200	0.197	0.074	2.708**	Accepted
H4	technology knowledge and skill -> career self-efficacy	0.225	0.227	0.059	3.811**	Accepted

Note: **p< 0.05, *p< 0.1
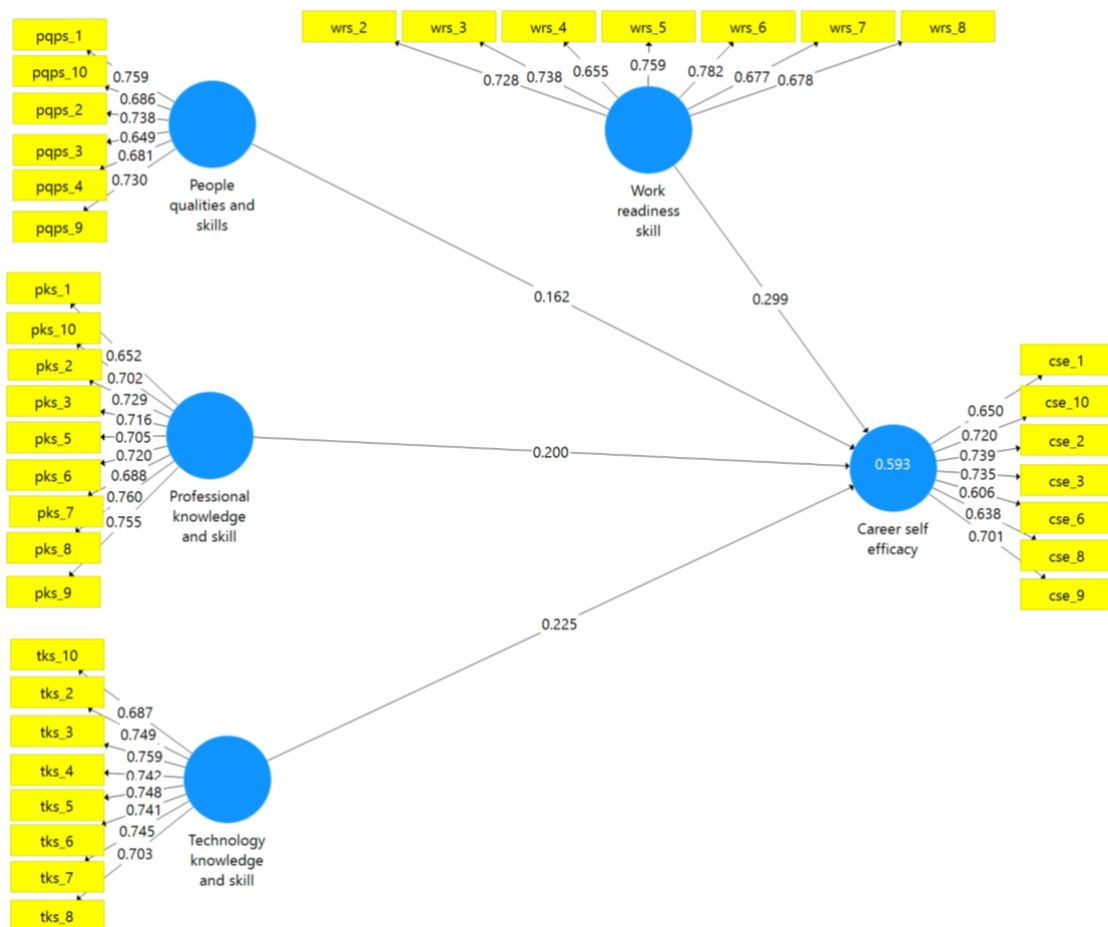
Figure 01. Structural Model

7. Conclusion

This research is conducted to measure work readiness skills as an independent variable and career self-efficacy as a dependent variable. This study explored all the three constructs of work readiness skills which are people qualities & people skills, professional knowledge & skills and technology knowledge & skills with career self-efficacy. The results support the previous findings of Makki et al. (2015). From the

relationship analysed, results demonstrated that all of the independent variables shows a significant effects with the dependent variable.

Bridging the graduate skills gap between government, employers and educational institutions is an important area in which HR professionals can contribute by reducing the mismatch between demand and supply through influencing and balancing the interests and goals of key stakeholders. Mandatory internships, apprenticeships and on-the-job training for students can be one of the initiatives for universities to implement. Governments can provide financial incentives and subsidies to organizations providing the above services and working cooperatively with the universities to get students work-ready. Universities must raise the educational requirements over time as jobs become more complex. Other than that, universities can build communities of practice with the assistance of this scheme to enable students to interact with the industry professionals. Finally, yet importantly, higher education should be aligned with employer needs by developing skills needed in the workplace.

Acknowledgments

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