

FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES

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ABSTRACT: Career choice is a complex and challenging decision-making process among undergraduates. Challenges of globalisation has not only imposed several changes in the education system but also on the employer expectations. The current economic scenario in the Malaysian context with rapid growth of digitalisation and demands of Industry 5.0 has made the job market highly competitive. Thus, making an appropriate career choice among undergraduates is an important area of study especially in the Malaysian context. Thus, this study aims to explore the factors influencing career among undergraduates in Melaka, Malaysia. A self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect data from 172 undergraduates using a convenience sampling technique. Data was analysed using SPSS 24. The multiple regression analysis indicate that all factors studied contribute to career choice. From the academic perspective this study has a significant contribution in terms of explaining the importance of employability skills, personality and pay in determining career choice among undergraduates.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Pay, Personality, Career choice, Undergraduates

1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment rate in Malaysia was almost up to 10.8% in the year 2017 which includes 204,000 graduates constituting 40.5% of total unemployment [16]. However, in 2018, although Malaysia experience better economic growth prospects, but job seekers especially graduates still face difficulties for employment due to few new openings and retrenchments across various industries [5]. Thus, in order to gain suitable employment, graduates are expected to make a clear career choice based on several factors such as education, employability skills, employer expectations and other job related factors.

Hence, the main objective of this research is to explore the key factors that influence career choice among young job seekers in the Malaysian context. This research is significant since it highlights the undergraduates on how to make a career choice based on their employability skills that match employer expectations. The study also helps employers understand the significance of human capital and their contributions towards business excellence. Thus, employers can create more attractive jobs in accordance with global trends accompanied by attractive pay, benefits and career growth to potential job seekers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Choice

Career choice is not a mere match between a job and individual. It is a complex decision-making process which includes an individual's behavioural, cognitive and educational background [8; 14 and 24]. According to [9] and [23] decisions towards career choice should be on a rational approach. This is because a successful career depicts the overall accomplishments of an individual from his or her occupation over a period of time [2].

Employability Skills

According to [4], employability skills is defined as quality and ability of candidate presents when accept the employment offer by the prospective company. For example, others [20], created a list of self-designed employability skills such as creativity, decisiveness, initiative, Self-awareness, enthusiasm, questioning /listening, attention to detail, oral communication, dependability, integrity, commitment, cooperation, team-working, understanding concepts, application of knowledge, technical, written communication, timekeeping, self-management, adaptability, work ethic, information retrieval, interpersonal, numeracy, problem solving, planning/organisation and other skills. (5) opine

employability skills can also be known as soft skills, generic skills, core skills or essential skills. Thus, employability skills become one of the key factors in determining the career choice among job seekers especially young graduates [15]. However, there are "sizeable and consistent disparities" between employer expectations and student skills across the world [3].

H1: Employability skills acquired by the undergraduates have a significant relationship on their career choice).

Personality

According to [7], a person's personality affects job tasks and affect appraisal negatively and resulting in bad outcome. A person's personality affects one's self-motivation with external motivation would reward in daily tasks and further result in job performance, personal fulfilment and development. Furthermore, with the personality characteristics of a person and professional interest realistic and good decision making can attribute to a better career choice and resulting in personal satisfaction and a better performance in their job [10].

Besides that, to have a proactive personality is an advantage as once a preferred career has been selected, managing and taking initiative to advance one's career is favourable. With proactive personality, future-oriented actions can also be included [19]. Those who have a high IQ yet have negative personality characteristics will not be able to achieve high academic standards and yet dropout in their future career [26]. Personality traits of an individual are influenced by cultural and environmental factors and thus they have a greater impact on the career choices [6 and 13].

H2: Personality traits of the undergraduates have a significant relationship on their career choice.

Pay

With the current economic situation pay is the most important reason as money provides a better lifestyle, economic security and well-being. As the cost of living is increasingly steadily majority of job seekers especially fresh graduates will prefer to select a job which offers a higher pay and therefore pay factor will be their first priority among other factors. Pay is the most important factor that determines the job satisfaction among majority of the urban Malaysian workers [25]. According to Heathfield [11], pay is determined based on market conditions fixed by employers in accordance with skill demands.

H3: Pay has a significant relationship on the career choice of undergraduates.

3. METHODOLOGY

A relevant and appropriate methodology was adopted for the purpose of data collection and analysis as mentioned by Sekaran [21]. This is essential for generating valid and reliable research output. A self-administered questionnaire was designed and distributed to 200 final year university students in the State of Melaka. The study adopted a convenience sampling technique for the selection of respondents. This sampling technique is easier as it saves time and cost. The data for the study was collected during September to November 2018. This period was selected because most of the respondents were in their final year and about to complete the degree. Thus, these students were highly suitable since they were in the process of making a career choice. A total of 172 valid responses were obtained for this study which represented 86% of the response. The measured items were adapted and modified from past studies related to career choice and employability skills. The dependent variable was career choice and the independent variables included employability skills, personality and pay.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 172 completed survey questionnaires were received. All questions tested were found to be reliable and valid. The reliability value was above 0.80 for all the variables (Table1) The descriptive analysis indicated that 55.8 % of the respondents who participated in this survey were found to be in the age group of 21-23. A total of 65 % of the respondents were female. Around 83% were in the final year business administration degree programme majoring in banking and finance. Around 98.35 % of the respondents were Malaysian citizens and in terms of race distribution 85.5 % of the respondents were Chinese. The correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between factors (Employability Skills, Personality, Pay) and career choice. The result is presented below. All the three independent variables have a positive impact on

career choice at 0.000 significant level. Therefore, it is evident that employability skills, personality and pay have significant relationship with career choice (Table 2). The study used multiple regression analysis in order to determine the predictors of dependent variable which is career choice. The results are presented in Table 3. The r square value is 0.761 which indicated that 76.1% of the career choice is influenced by employability skills, pay and personality of undergraduates. Furthermore, the F value is 51.601 and the p value is 0.000 (p <0.05). Therefore, it means that the least one of the independent variables predicts the dependent variable (Table 3). The coefficient analysis result is presented in Table 6. The significant value showed that all of the factors have p value of below 0.05. This means all the factors are predictors. The highest beta value is for pay (B= 0.480). This indicates that pay is the most significant influencing factor on career choice. This is followed by employability skills (B= 0.319), and the lowest is for personality (B= 0.172; p<0.05).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Employability Skills	.897
Pay	.899
Personality	.867
Career Choice	.874

Table 2: Results of Correlation Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Career choice
Employability Skills	Pearson Correlation	.744
	Sig	.000
Personality	Pearson Correlation	.709
	Sig	.000
Pay	Pearson Correlation	.813
	Sig	.000

Table 3: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate	F	Sig
.872	.761	.757	.335	51.601	.000

Table 4: Coefficient Table

Model	Unstd Coefficients		Std.Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
Constant	.132	.176		. 731	.454
Employability Skills	.319	.050	.333	6.372	.000
Personality	.172	.064	.150	2.676	.002
Pay	.480	.053	.501	9.050	.000

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors influencing career choice of undergraduates in the Malaysian context. The study was conducted among the final year business administration students majoring in banking and finance, marketing, international business

and human resource management. They were considered appropriate to provide information since they are ready to complete the course and in the process of selecting a suitable career. Three factors were tested to identify which contributes to the career choice and the finding

reveals all the factors tested are contributors. Pay is the most important factor that influences career choice. This finding is supported by [1] whose research was on exploring factors contributing to career choice among business studies graduates. Besides pay, personality traits of an individual also play a vital role in determining the career choice of individuals especially undergraduates [12]. However, employability skills also play a significant role in making a career choice. The employability skills acquired by the undergraduates through their education and self-development techniques need to be improved to meet the requirements and the expectations of the employers. This finding is supported by [22]. Undergraduates who possess the required employability skills are able to make a right decision regarding their career. This is supported by Andrews and Russel [2].

5. CONCLUSION

This research depicts the significance of making a rational career choice among undergraduates. Factors such as pay, personality traits and employability skills influence career choice among undergraduates. The study has highlighted that skill mismatch leads to unemployment among undergraduates and these skills are to be improved in accordance with industry demands. Sample size is identified as the key limitation of this research. Future study should consider a higher number of respondents. Furthermore, representatives of Ministry of Education can also be used as sample. Employers' viewpoint can be an area of study especially in the context of employability skills and pay. In addition, studies in future may include a set of other variables to determine career choice.

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