The Influencing Factors towards Graduates Employability among Malaysian Public University Undergraduates from 2016 until 2019

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between university characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning orientation toward graduate employability among Malaysian public university undergraduates. The theoretical model based on the resource-based view approach to graduated employability was developed. To answer the research questions, four hypotheses were formulated. Online survey questionnaires were distributed to 20 public universities in Malaysia. A total of 433 graduates from the year 2016 until 2019 were involved in this study. This data are gathered and analyzed using SPSS Software. The findings show that university characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning orientation have significant influences on graduate employability. The implication of this study could help universities in designing a better curriculum that would increase the level of graduate employability among students, and ensure the learning process learning quality and skills required by the job market meets all the characteristics required by employers.

Keywords:

University characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, learning orientation, graduates' employability

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, graduate employability has been a problem for over a decade. According to the study undertaken by the Malaysian Department of Statistics, the number of unemployed graduates in 2019 was 170,300, up 5.5 percent from 2018 (161,300). Active jobless graduates made up 74.8 percent of all unemployed graduates (127,400). Moreover, half of the active unemployed graduates (51.6 percent or 65,700) were unemployed for less than three months, while 29.5 percent (37,500) were unemployed for three to six months. However, 10.9 percent (13,900) of them were unemployed for six months or less than a year, while 8.1 percent (10,300) were unemployed for more than a year. Hence these data show that the graduates' unemployment issue in our nation should be solved soon.

Meanwhile, the growing number of public and private universities has been cited as a contributing factor. At the same time, due to a scarcity of posts, industries were unable to

provide many work opportunities to degree holders. As a result, there is a greater supply of graduates than there is demand for them. As a result, there is more competition among graduates. It has been discovered that excellent grades are not always a determining factor in a graduate's employability (Azmi, Hashim, & Yusoff, 2018). Besides that, it has been stated that university students lack some soft skills, including problem solving and communication abilities (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014), as well as hard skills, such as technical knowledge, difficulties applying knowledge, and English communication skills (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014). (Lim, Teck, Ching & Chui, 2016).

From the perspective of employers, they need graduates with multiple skills who can multitask and perform any work that is assigned to them, including ones that they have never encountered or learned in university. Employers look for particular employability abilities in graduates based on the type of work and scope of the job market (Raybould & Sheedy, 2005). Employers prefer individuals that can adapt to every condition in the workplace, as seen by this quote. This condition will have a major impact on job performance, according to Rosenberg, Heimler, and Morote (2012).

Furthermore, one of the reasons for unemployment is that fresh graduates do not demonstrate strong performance to employers. According to Hossain et al. (2018), graduates do not show good performance and are lacking in employability skills. A significant percentage of Malaysian employers are claimed to have a bad view of graduates, claiming that they lack the necessary skills and qualifications for the sector (Hossain et al., 2018).

As a result, there are a lot of important components that must be addressed in order to increase the quality of graduates which have the potential to solve our nation's graduates' employability. Entrepreneurial orientation, university characteristics, and learning orientation are among these qualities which must be modeled together to produce holistic graduates. These attributes are important in enhancing graduates' employability. This is because the university's responsibility in giving students encouragement or support is vital in ensuring that they are continually striving to develop academically. Universities may help students improve their views, competence, confidence, and self-esteem by providing cross-curricular courses combined with specialized training (Iglesias-Sánchez et al 2016). Educational institutions must play an important role in ensuring that the education provided results in high-quality graduate students.

In addition, quality is a choice rather than a change in the educational field (Advant & Makhirja, 2003). Employers are looking for characteristics like pro-activeness, innovativeness, and risk-taking when it comes to entrepreneurial orientation (EO). Cvijić, et al. (2019) assume graduates' that participate in entrepreneurship activities are more likely to have an entrepreneurial mindset. Proactive measures, such as allowing graduates possible to create their businesses on campus, should also be taken by the university. Hopefully, this will encourage more students to become graduate entrepreneurs by providing them with real-world experience. Finally, this emphasizes the significance of these three characteristics in improving graduate employment.

As a consequence, the following research question will be addressed in this study:

RQ1. What are the influences factors towards graduate's employability?

The current study examines samples of undergraduates from the year 2016 until 2019. The significance of this study is that it seeks to examine graduates' employability in terms of university characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning orientation among graduates. To gather data for the research, a questionnaire was circulated to graduates from their university organization networks such as their official Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegrams groups.

Five parts comprise the article, the first of which is an introduction. The second part is dedicated to the literature review, model specification, and hypothesis formulation. The third section focuses on the techniques used to perform the scientific study. The paper's fourth section contains the decision, and its fifth section contains the conclusion and limitations of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Graduates' employability

"A combination of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that boost an individual's chances of acquiring and excelling in their chosen occupation for the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" is how the term "employability" is defined (Moreland, 2006, p. 21; Finch et al., 2016). To put it another way, one of the attributes that a graduate must possess is graduate employability. These characteristics include job competency, social intelligence, and personal work features. Academic performance, graduates' meta-skills, such as interpersonal and communication skills, job-specific skills, critical thinking, and certain personality qualities, such as motivation and flexibility, have all been studied concerning employability (Finch et al.,2016). According to Mason et al., (2009) perspective of employers, employability often refers to work readiness, that is, the possession of the relevant skills, knowledge, behaviors, and commercial awareness that enable graduates to make positive contributions to organizations, soon after commencing employment. Therefore, based on past research found that university characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning orientation are core elements for graduated employability which needs more research to conduct (Cvijić et al., 2019).

University characteristics

The characteristics of a good university are extremely important for an educational institution since it contributes greatly to a country's progress in research, whether in technology or economy. According to Ponomariov (2008), the university plays a key role in boosting the country's competitiveness by facilitating the transfer of fundamental knowledge and research to industrial applications. This statement demonstrates the university's importance not just for research contributions to the country's progress, but also for the country's industrial sector. According to Hornsby & Montagno (1999), management help, operational structure, and the supply of incentives and services are all critical in improving quality in an organization. This is because the role of educational institutions or universities in terms of assistance is critical since University characteristics that offer help to students would instill a sense of gratitude in them. This research evaluates university elements such as course discretion, resource/time availability, management assistance, and rewards/reinforcement which are highly needed for graduates.

Entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation, according to Lumpkin and Dess (1996), is described as the decision-making processes, practices, and activities that lead to new entry through creative, proactive, and risk-taking procedures. Entrepreneurial orientation, according to Miller (1983), is a performance-based paradigm that includes risk-taking, innovation, and proactive corporate behavior. Apart from that, according to Ibrahim and Mas'ud (2016), entrepreneurial orientation is a set of knowledge and awareness skills obtained by an individual that leads to the adoption of entrepreneurial behavior or the establishment and execution of new initiatives. entrepreneurial orientation is also claimed to be mirrored in common organizational behaviors like innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking (Quince & Whittaker, 2003). As a result, graduates must possess an Entrepreneurial orientation attribute in order to match the demands of their future employers. Entrepreneurial orientation is measured in this study using innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness.

Learning Orientation

The process of obtaining new knowledge and applying it through learning based on current experience and expertise is known as learning orientation. Individual learning, according to Baum et al., (2011), is a dialectical process including access to new knowledge and the capacity to incorporate that new knowledge into existing knowledge sets. Learning is a process in which humans turn new experiences into a blend of new and current knowledge, according to Joy and Kolb (2009). Furthermore, the skills and information supplied during the learning process might assist students in their preparation for the actual job sector. Effective skills training, according to Hanapi and Nordin (2014), will generate educated and skilled graduates before they reach the workforce. They also asserted that it will generate graduates that have high work ethics, are proactive, and can address work-related challenges. The academic experience of students while studying at their particular universities is used to determine learning orientation in this study.

Based on the above literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

H_1: There is no influence between entrepreneurial orientations toward graduate employability
H_2: There is no influence between university characteristics towards graduate employability.
H_3: There is no influence between learning orientation towards graduate employability.
H_4: Entrepreneurial orientation, university characteristics, and learning orientation factors are not significant predictors for graduate employability.

METHODOLOGY

The study's target population was conducted among former public university students throughout Malaysia who graduated between 2016 to 2019 from every public university in Malaysia. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to students by using an online google form. To ensure that information is kept confidential only researchers are given permission to access the data collection section in the website google form application (Hair et al., 2020). A total of 433 respondents were received for analysis. The questionnaire applied a five-point Likert-type scale represented by 1-lowest to 5-highest (Eutsler & Lang, 2015). The

questionnaires consist of four sections, namely Sections A, B, C, and D to obtain study data. The questionnaires used in this study are adapted from several questionnaires from previous studies that are suitable as a guide (Saunders & Rojon, 2014). Therefore, students were given a survey to assess their perceptions of entrepreneurial orientation, university characteristics, and learning orientation towards graduate employability. Their ratings were collected and analyzed using linear regression analysis and multiple linear regression in SPSS Software (George & Mallery, 2019).

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1 displays that the majority of respondents in this study were female with a total of 223 respondents representing (52.6%) of the total sample. While the rest were male (201 respondents), which is (47.4%) of the total sample. The results of this analysis show that females were the larger group of graduates from public universities between 2016 to 2019 compared to male graduates. In addition, most respondents consisted of graduates aged between 24 to 30 years which is 405 respondents (95.4 %) followed by respondents aged 31 to 35 years which is 11 respondents (2.5 %), while respondents aged 36 to 40 years only 2 respondents (0.5 %), and lastly followed by respondents at aged 41 years and above who were only 6 respondents (1.4 %). This analysis clearly shows that most public university graduates who participated in this questionnaire were those aged 24 years to 30 years.

Next, the universities involved in this study were public universities throughout Malaysia. There is four university region that is divided in this study based on where the university is located, northern, central, southern, and eastern. The highest number of respondents are from central which was 153 respondents (36.1%) followed by respondents from northern Malaysia which was 108 respondents (25.5%). Then respondents eastern are 86 respondents (20.3%). Lastly, southern recorded a total of 77 respondents (18.2%).

In addition, the frequency distribution according to the year of graduation of the respondents where the highest is the respondents who graduated in 2019 which is a total of 240 respondents (56.6%), followed by 2018 a total of 93 respondents (21.9%), 2017 a total of 39 respondents (9.2%), 2016 a total of 31 respondents (7.3%) and finally the year 2015 which is a total of 21 respondents (5.0%). In the meantime, shows that 100.0% of respondents with a total of 424 respondents is degree holder.

Next, the frequency distribution by field of study, respondents where the highest are respondents in the field of computing & IT studies which are 119 respondents (28.1%), followed by education as many as 60 respondents (14.2%), Science (Life Science) /Physical Science/Applied Science) a total of 52 respondents (12.3%), while the field of Business Management & Administration with a total of 38 respondents (9.0%). Meanwhile, in the field of Engineering & Engineering Trades 36 respondents (8.5%) and Languages the number of respondents with 35 respondents (8.3%), in the field of Humanities is 23 respondents (5.4%), while Accounting & finance are with a total number of 12 respondents (2.8%) same with Arts & design, and follow by Communication & Broadcasting with a total number of 8 respondents (1.9%). The field of Architecture and building Medicine & Healthcare recorded the same number of respondents with 7 respondents (1.7%). Law and Mathematics & Statistics with the same number of 4 respondents (0.9%). For the field of Manufacturing & Processing as many as 3 respondents (0.7%), Agriculture, forestry, fishery, and a veterinarian as many as 2

respondents (0.5%), and finally the field of Environmental Protection and Medical Diagnostic & Treatment Technology with the lowest number of 1 respondent each (0.2%).

The frequency distribution of respondents according to how many graduates have applied for a job for this study. The highest frequency distribution in this study is the respondents who have applied for jobs of 1 to 5 which is 138 people representing (32.5%) of the total respondents. While respondents who have applied for jobs of 6 to 10 are 91 respondents (21.5%), respondents who have applied for jobs of more than 20 are 75 respondents (17.7%), and respondents who have applied for jobs of 11 to 15 are 50 respondents (11.8%) and 15 to 20 jobs applied are 49 respondents (11.6%). Lastly, the lowest is the respondents who have never applied for a job which is a total of 21 respondents (5%).

After that, the frequency distribution of respondents according to how many interviews that graduates have gone so far for this study. The highest frequency distribution in this study is the respondents who have attended interviews of 1 to 3 which is a total of 150 respondents representing (35.4%) of the total respondents. While the respondents who have attended interviews of 4 to 6 is a total of 83 respondents (19.6%), respondents who have attended interviews of 7 to 9 are a total of 60 respondents (14.2%) and people that never attended the interviews are 59 respondents (13.9%).

Meanwhile, the respondents who had attended the interview more than 12 were 38 respondents (9%), and the lowest were the respondents who attended the interview 10 to 12 which is a total of 34 respondents (8%).

In addition, the frequency distribution of respondents according to job applications is appropriate to the degree level, or lower for this study. The highest frequency distribution in this study is the respondents who have applied for all job applications in accordance with their degree level which is 211 respondents representing (49.8%) of the total respondents. While the respondents who have applied for several applications in accordance with their degree level is a total of 207 respondents (48.8%), and the lowest is the respondents who applied for jobs where all applications for jobs are lower than their degree level which is a total of 6 respondents (1.4%).

Next, the frequency distribution of respondents according to graduates who have worked or not for this study. The highest frequency distribution in this study is the respondents who have worked which is a total of 247 respondents representing (58.3%) of the total respondents. While the respondents who are self-employed are as many as 90 respondents (21.2%) and followed by those who are not employed as many as 72 respondents (17.0%). Finally, the lowest number of respondents who continued their studies, which was 15 respondents (3.5%).

Finally, the frequency distribution of respondents according to the views of the jobs they do relate or not to what they were students while at university for this study. The highest frequency distribution in this study is the respondents who answered YES which is 184 respondents representing (43.4%) of the total respondents. While the respondents who answered NO were 168 respondents (39.6%). Finally, the lowest number of respondents who answered NONE which is 72 respondents (17%). This number of none is because there are respondents who do not work.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Particular	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	204	47.1
	Female	229	52.9
	Total	**433**	**100**
Age	24-30	413	95.4
	31-35	12	2.7
	36-40	2	0.5
	41>	6	1.4
	Total	**433**	**100**
University Region	Northern	92	21.25
	Central	157	36.26
	Southern	60	13.86
	Western	101	23.32
	Eastern	23	5.31
	Total	**433**	**100**
Year of graduation	2015	22	5.1
	2016	33	7.6
	2017	39	9.0
	2018	93	21.5
	2019	246	56.8
	Total	**433**	**100**
Jobs applied	None	21	4.8
	1-5	140	32.3
	6-10	93	21.5
	11-15	50	11.5
	15-20	51	11.8
	More than 20	78	18.0
	Total	**433**	**100.0**
Interview(s)	None	60	13.9
	1-3	154	35.6
	4-6	84	19.4
	7-9	62	14.3
	10-12	35	8.1
	More than 12	38	8.8
	Total	**433**	**100.0**
Currently employed	Yes	253	58.4
	Self-employed	90	20.8
	Continue study	18	4.2
	No	72	16.6
	Total	**433**	**100.0**
Job related to studied	Yes	190	43.9
	No	171	39.5
	None	72	16.6

Total	**433**	**100.0**

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 show that university characteristics (β = 0.571), (t = 14.281), p <.05) is a significant predictor for graduate employability. These findings explain that university characteristics are factors influencing graduate employability.

Table 2: Coefficients for the relationship between university characteristics and graduate employability

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	**(Constant)**	1.065	.181		5.872	.000
	university characteristics	.658	.046	.571	14.281	.000

Table 3 shows that entrepreneurial orientation (β = 0.401, t=8.995, p<.05) is a significant predictor of graduate employability. These findings explain that entrepreneurial orientation is a factor in influencing graduate employability.

Table 3: Coefficients for the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and graduate employability

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	**(Constant)**	1.501	.239		6.280	.000
	entrepreneurial orientation	.541	.060	.401	8.995	.000

Table 4 show that learning orientation (β = 0.081, t=1.673, p <.05) is a not significant predictor for graduate employability. These findings explain that learning orientation is not a factor in influencing graduate employability.

Table 4: Coefficients for the relationship between learning orientation and graduate employability

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	**(Constant)**	3.280	.219		14.954	.000
	Learning orientation	.083	.049	.081	1.673	.095

However, Table 5 show that university characteristics (β=0.486, t=10.463, p<.05), entrepreneurial orientation (β = 0.212, t=3.991, p <.05), and learning orientation (β = -0.129, t = -2.803, p <.05) is a significant predictor for graduate employability. These findings explain that entrepreneurial orientation, university characteristics and learning orientation are factors in influencing graduate employability.

Table 5: Coefficients for the relationship between university characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning orientation toward graduate employability

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.898	.241		3.726	.000
University characteristics	.560	.053	.486	10.463	.000
Entrepreneurial orientation	.286	.072	.212	3.991	.000
Learning orientation	-.132	.047	-.129	-2.803	.005

This study found that all three factors that have been discussed are significant predictors for graduate employability intentions. There is a strong relationship between university characteristics, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning orientation towards graduate employability.

The study's hypotheses, which are university qualities that are favorably connected with graduates' employability, were statistically validated based on the research goals. This theory agrees with Pouratashi and Zamani (2019), who found that university features in Iran are linked to graduates' employment. Students' employability abilities might be divided into three categories (basic, intermediate, and advanced) and five levels, according to their findings. In addition, component analysis of university activities aimed at improving students' employability skills revealed five activities: support, cultural, informative, research, and educational. The findings of this study also show that, under the umbrella of university characteristics, graduates who are better supported in terms of financial, skill enhancement, educational resources, and motivation are more likely to find work.

Following that, this research examined the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and graduate employability in public institutions, especially in Malaysia. As a result, this study is the first to experimentally examine the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on graduate employment. Entrepreneurial orientation is defined in this study as an increase in risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactive behavior that improves their employability after graduation. This outcome is consistent with Bell's predictions (2016). Both of their entrepreneurial orientation features were statistically connected to the chance of graduates being engaged in a professional or management role six months after graduation, according to their research.

Finally, this study has also investigated the relationship between learning orientation and graduate employability. The regression, liner analysis found that there is no relationship

between learning orientation and employability of graduates whereas the results of the analysis found that it is not significant. However, the results of multiple linear regression analysis found that it is significant among all factors. It is found that the relationship between the three factors is very important in improving the marketability of students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study is very important because it can benefit several parties. The results of the study found that relevant and significant variables can help universities or educational institutions to produce students who can work and can meet the needs of employers. This study shows that not only should universities focus on providing their students with the best learning environment and have good university features, but universities must also apply entrepreneurial orientation in their teaching and learning. In terms of entrepreneurial orientation in universities, the endowment of human capital and social networks are often considered two foundations of scientists 'ability to contribute new knowledge to society (Cvijić et al., 2019).

In addition to providing the best learning environment and having a good university characteristic, the characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation must be inculcated in every student before graduating from university so that they are prepared to face the challenges of globalization and liberalization of the world of work. Every university and educational institution whether public or private university needs to ensure that these characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation are applied in the teaching and learning process. Emphasis on the characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation in educational institutions will produce students who are willing to accept any assignment or instruction from the employer. This situation will indirectly increase employers 'confidence in new graduates who show good job performance in the workplace to work in their company.

Lastly, this study also found that learning orientation is also important to students so that they can prepare themselves to meet the criteria required by employers. Therefore, students should always strive to seek new knowledge and experience. According to Baum et al., (2011), individual learning is a dialectical process that encompasses access to new knowledge and the ability to assimilate that new knowledge into current knowledge sets. If university graduates can meet the characteristics required by employers, of course, unemployment among university graduates can be reduced because the required conditions can be met by graduates. If unemployment can be reduced, then national income will also increase.

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