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THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS, IT LITERACY SKILLS AND TEAMWORK ABILITY ON INTERNSHIP STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY: PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYERS' INTERNSHIP COORDINATORS

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Abstract:

Lack of emphasis on the quality and excellent competencies should be equipped by the students who joining internship programme leads to negative implications on their future career markets. Therefore, the students will not be able to maintain their competitiveness in getting the bright prospects of their careers. Determination of the strategic factors that would promote employability among the students at internship programme are very crucial. This research aims to examine the employers' internship coordinators' perceptions on the influence of competencies on employability among the students who undergo for internship programme. Investigating students competencies in this study are based on the dimensions namely leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability. Questionnaires were adapted from previous empirical research instruments and data were analyzed using the "Statistical Package for Social Science" (SPSS) version 26.0. This study involved a total of 113 internship coordinators from different public sector employers as respondents. The results of the correlation and regression analyses revealed that leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability had a positive relationship and significant effect on employability respectively. In addition, the

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result of this study showed that the most dominant determinant factor of students' competencies affecting employability was teamwork ability. The results of this study were seen to be able to contribute within the scope of knowledge in managing education, training and development and the importance of improving students' competencies in promoting their employability as required by the employers.

Keywords:

Leadership Skills, IT Skills, Teamwork Ability, Employability & Employers' Internship Coordinators.

Introduction

Employability among internship students or graduates is a very vital element that should be emphasized to ensure their place in the jobs market. Graduates of any program, in particular, should have a sense of skill in their area of specialization and the courage to explore new opportunities and new employment, especially if there is increased competition among colleagues at work (Woya, 2019). Therefore, the current discussion about how to improve higher education has centered on whether graduates have the required skills to prepare them for the workplace. Employer feedback suggests discontent with the quality of graduates entering the workforce. The major point of criticism is that graduates' education programs have failed to adapt to changing industrial realities and practices (Molinsky & Pisman, 2019). According to Doyle (2021), employers are searching for a more flexible, adaptable workforce so that these young employees may help their organizations become more flexible and adaptable to shifting market demands. This employer expectation, according to Rainie (2022), does not imply that graduates should be able to do the job right away without additional training, but rather that they should be able to acquire the skills that facilitate and enhance employment opportunities. In this regard, Saltikoff (2017) suggested that acquiring information, skills, and talents will increase graduates' chances of success in their chosen vocation, whether paid or unpaid.

Cheng et al. (2021) emphasized the significance of close collaboration between educators, employers, and government to assist establishing suitable teaching and training programs in order to place an emphasis on learning and the possession of skills. Scholars have proposed industry training, also known as internship, as one of the ways for addressing the problem of a shortage of job-related skills. The goal of internship is to introduce students to the workplace (Abdul Shukor, 2020). According to Anjum (2020), students who have received industrial training are more confident when they join the workforce. As a result, it's no surprise that industry training is required, or at the very least encouraged, in many universities' curriculum.

Most of the research on internship programme do not identify the skills students require to be job ready; instead, they focus on the benefits that students may obtain from such training. One of the advantages of internship, according to Habets et al. (2020), is that graduates can withstand entrance shock when they join the labor market. Employers claim that students who have received industry training during internship do better than those who have not (Succi & Canovi, 2019). Students say that industrial training has been beneficial to them and that their performance during the program has been satisfactory (Azmi et al., 2018).

Although unemployment is a natural phenomenon, it creates a problem for the individual when unemployment covers a longer period. Addressing this issue needs a significant amount of research across various parts of the globe (Rahman et al., 2019). In past few years, the issue of unemployment among graduates in Malaysia has becoming a serious and rising concern for the nation. Even though each year the higher education institutions in Malaysia such as the public and private universities managed to produce significant numbers of graduates, the percentage of those graduates being employed and have a job is remarkably high. Based on the survey by the Malaysia Labour Force Survey, the unemployed includes those who were eligible to work but are rather constantly searching for job during. According to Abdul Wahab (2022), from the year 2010 to 2018, the number of unemployed fresh graduates rose from 86,534 to 170,105 graduates. It is difficult for graduates to find employment since the quantity of graduates being produced outpaces the amount that the labour market can accommodate. Employers might be selective when there is a high supply of graduates, and it frequently happens that graduates are demoted to non-graduate positions.

The Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020) estimates that roughly six out of every ten unemployed individuals are under the age of 24. More than 250,000 students graduate each year, but 1 in 5 recent graduates are still looking for work even after six months of their graduation. The rate of diplomas and degrees that are unemployed is now three times the national average. About 26% of first-degree holders among these recent tertiary graduates are not working. About 50% of recent graduates who are unemployed attended public universities, while 47% attended private ones.

Therefore, to increase the chances of the internship students to succeed in moving into the companies they are in, this study emphasizes public agencies employers around Kuala Lumpur. Hence, through this study, researchers can find out whether leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability impact the employability of internship students.

Literature Review

Impact of Leadership Skills on Employability

Crowne (2019) stated that, leadership is a manner of motivating people, and it serves as a critical thing for any organization. According to Sheriff et al. (2017), leadership is the skill of inspiring a group of individuals to work toward a common objective. According to Gerhardt (2019), the study acts as a bridge among students' leadership and their employment assurance. The study was carried out in London using the qualitative approach, which has been a component in nine areas of study and several leadership undertakings. Five student group leaders were selected in the study, and their performance was assessed using thorough analysis during the organizing, training, and evaluation phases. The assignment was done in the second week of the mentoring session which concentrate on leadership theme. The process then needs around a week to finish this stage. The group reflects on its understanding, insights, and implementation in the workplace. This study proposed that graduates' employability would benefit from having leadership skills.

The Influence of IT Literacy Skills on Employability

In the modern world, information technology (IT) is important in all aspects of life. It significantly influences how people live and work. The conventional methods of teaching and learning have been put to the test by new and emerging technology. Access to a wide range of facts is beneficial, making absorption and assessment skills more difficult. Learning has

become a simple, lifelong activity that can aid in ongoing assessment thanks to IT literacy (Budhwar, 2017).

Of all the aspects, industrial training is one of the most crucial. Students are frequently exposed to their fundamental concepts in precise training sessions in addition to receiving subject-specific instruction, which enables them to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable in their field (Mohapatra, 2019). With the present market conditions, IT literacy is now essential in improving employable skills. The adoption and use of IT has created opportunity for different working styles as well as for scheduling and managing tasks (Toner, 2011). IT proficiency has been acknowledged as a requirement for management student employment. It can be viewed as a first step that opens the potential of employment and a crucial component of the necessary set of abilities (Mohapatra, 2019). For an institution to connect with industries and track the development of commercial operations, effective use of digital technologies and ICT is crucial (Metilda, 2017).

Impact of Teamwork Ability on Employability

Individuals who can collaborate well in teams are more likely to be the organization's best employees because they are able to make a greater contribution to the organisation, according to Kashyap (2022). So, if the graduate could collaborate in a team, the organisation will have fewer or no problems, and they will be able to do their tasks with full dedication regardless of their position in the team. Improved teamwork can also contribute to the achievement of the company's objectives (Karia & Asaari, 2006).

A study by Nusrat and Sultana (2019), also found out that teamwork ability is one of the skills which are searched by the employers among the graduates. It was done in Bangladesh by a quantitative method. The study was a joint project between university-level institutes and employers of fresh graduated students. It also shows that teamwork ability has a positive relationship with graduates' employability.

Theoretical Support

Education, according to the Human Capital Theory, is a critical component in constructing an economy and is addressed as such in order to be competent in global economic developments (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Therefore, by providing the suitable education for the students, in this context is industrial training, students and employers can identify the best skills among leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability in terms of industrial training students' employability. When assessing a student's employability from the perspective of a company, the skills and knowledge of employed graduates are assessed, with a human capital approach to graduates' employability skills being emphasised (Jonck, 2014). This theory also supported that educating a future employee would help him to be more adaptable to changes in the organization (Jonck, 2014). This is parallel to this research. A majority of concepts concerning professional preparation, knowledge generating, public sphere enlightenment, and cultural knowledge are also emphasised by human capacities or their growth (McLean et al., 2012). By this means, identifying the right skills for the organization helps to ensure employees' retention. This is relatable especially for industrial training students because they are only one step ahead to get into real working life. The human capital term is utilised to reflect the quality of labour, hence the knowledge and skills.

The literature has been used to develop a conceptual framework for this study as shown in Figure 1.

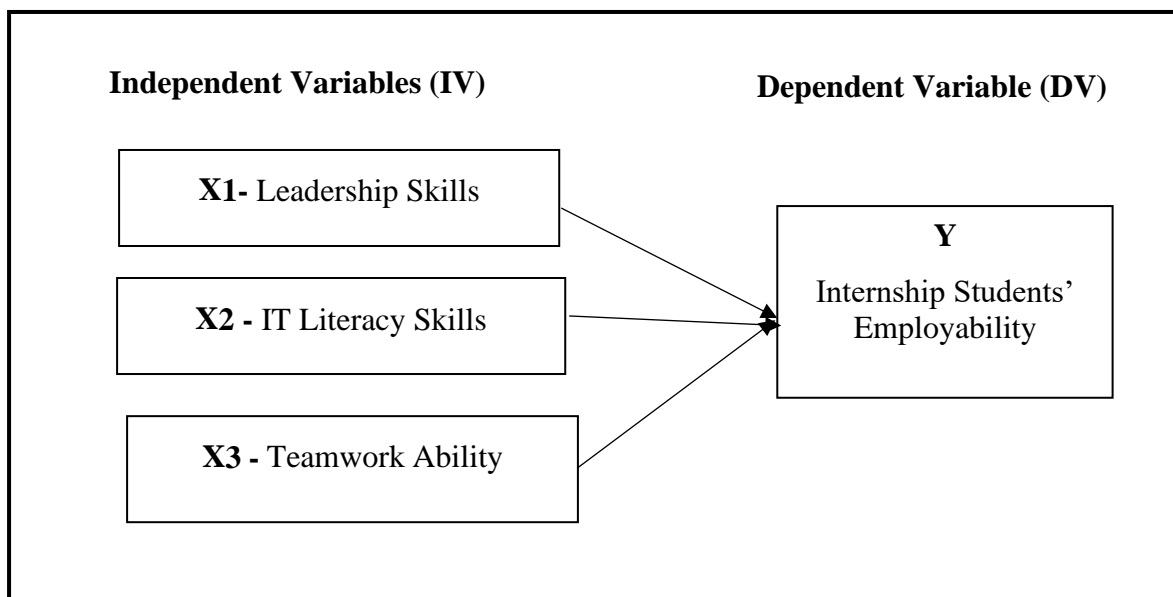


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Discussions from the above literature also promote this study to develop the hypotheses as following;

H₁: There is a positive and significant effect of leadership skills on employability.

H₂: Impact of IT literacy skills on employability is positive and significant.

H₃: Teamwork ability positively and significantly affects employability.

Methodology

A quantitative research design by survey method involving the distribution of questionnaires was used for this study. Survey technique is the most suitable chosen because respondents' data and information would be gathered in the latest and clear form that relates to the issues and scenarios during conducting this study. Therefore, this study involved respondents who were purposively selected using the Minimum Determination Table for respondents suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The selected sample consists of internship coordinator from each of public sector employers operating in Klang Valley area. For this research purpose, the data collected was made by self-administered questionnaire. This study distributed 130 questionnaires to ensure the minimum response achieve the number of possible sample size (113) from 160 size of population.

The questionnaire items for independent variables and dependent variable were adapted and modified from past research and other related studies. The source of leadership skills is from Northouse (2011) and Jensen et al. (2019). Items for IT literacy skills were taken from Mohd Khalid, Yahaya and Fee Din (2019) as well as from Habibija-Razanica and Mekic (2021). Meanwhile, teamwork ability were adopted and modified from Brock, McAliney and Ma (2019). Besides, items for internship students' employability were used from Bilal and Ummah (2016).

Furthermore, the testing of the reliability and validity of the study is also feasible to ensure that the two levels of testing are high and reliable. According to Hair et al. (2019) the aspect of validation should be carried out which involves the face validity and content validity. In this study, the validity of the content and face validity were done through the professional approval of each item in the questionnaire. Each item on the instrument is measured logically and precisely so that what is meant in measurement can be clearly understood (Schindler, 2022). Then, pilot study was also conducted on 20 selected respondents with the result that all Alpha Cronbach values for each variable item exceeded 0.6 and above. This high value illustrates that all questionnaire items can be used for actual research and free from item deletion. Furthermore, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2020), if the Alpha Cronbach value exceeds 0.6 means the items have a good internal consistency level. Finally, the analysis of the data was carried out on 113 respondents comprising the employers who completed their answers in the questionnaires. This value of response rate meets the level suggested by the scholar (Schindler, 2022) which is allowed to conduct further research. Analysis using SPSS version 20 software involving data filtering, descriptive and inferential analyses.

Analyses And Findings

Reliability Test of Pilot Study and Actual Survey

Reliability is about how well the researcher could get consistent feedback by using an instrument of questionnaire to measure something at one time and more. On the other hand, reliability means whether or not the research method is able to yield strong and consistent results (Schindler, 2022). Therefore, this study assessed the consistency levels of the variables data which were famously used by past researchers for the instrument reliability test. As usual, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was utilized to confirm the acceptable inter-item consistency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). In the pilot study, the researcher selected a total of 20 respondents comprising the officers as internship coordinators from public sector employers. By using SPSS version 26 for windows to analyze the reliability of the instrument of this study, the results show the values from 0.832 to 0.856 prove the high values of Cronbach alpha coefficient (See in the Table 1). Interestingly, referring to the reliability levels guideline provided by the famous scholar above, this study confirmed the acceptable reliability of the constructs and for conducting further descriptive and inferential analyses in completing the findings of this study. Furthermore, the instruments used in this study are significant to be referred for future studies in the area of students' competencies and employability.

Table 1 : Reliability Test

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha (Pilot Study)	Cronbach's Alpha (Actual Survey)
Leadership Skills	0.837	0.746
IT Literacy Skills	0.848	0.740
Teamwork Ability	0.856	0.733
Students Employability	0.832	0.750

Demographic Data

Based on the demographic profile analysis (See Table 2), the results showed that 68% of respondents are males and 32% are females. Meanwhile, most respondents, 65% are Malays

and non Malays are about 35%. It was found that mostly, 53% of respondents' age are those who are around 26-35 years old . Others are below 26 years and above 35 years old. While majority which are 48% of respondents have served the organisations between 6-10 years.

Table 2 : Respondents' Demography (N=113)

Respondent's Demographic	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	77	68.1
Female	36	31.9
Total	113	100.0
Race		
Malay	73	64.6
Chinese	27	23.9
Indian	12	10.6
Others	1	0.9
Total	113	100
Age group		
20-25 years old	11	9.7
26-35 years old	60	53.1
36-45 years old	35	31.0
46-55 years old	7	6.2
56 years old above	0	0
Total	113	100
Duration of Service		
1-5 years	12	10.6
6-10 years	54	47.8
11-15 years	44	38.9
16 years above	3	2.7
Total	113	100

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation Analysis was carried out to provide the basic ideas to research about the pattern of the inter-correlations of the study variables. Table 3 is a summary of the results from Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Table 3: Correlation Results for Examined Variables

	Students Employability	Leadership Skills	IT Literacy Skills	Teamwork Ability
Students' Employability	1	.895***	.862***	.902***
Leadership Skills		1		
IT Literacy Skills			1	
Teamwork Ability				1

From Table 3 it can be confirmed that correlation between independent variables and dependent variable such as leadership skills ($r = 0.895$, $p < 0.01$), IT literacy skills ($r = 0.862$, $p < 0.01$) and teamwork ability ($r = 0.902$, $p < 0.01$) are positively correlated with students' employability.

Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables

The results in Table 4 indicate that leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability are significant (significant at < 0.001). They are also positively correlated and able to predict internship students' employability variable ($\beta = .346$, $\beta = .257$ and $\beta = .405$). There is a fact to understand that these three predictors may explain why there are associations between those predictors and internship students' employability perceived by the employers' internship coordinators. In this survey, students' employability level would be enhanced if the students themselves really emphasize to improve leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability. The result also illustrates that 88% of the variance of employability are explained by those three predictors; leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability. Besides, 12% of the variances are explained by other potential antecedents that to be studied by future researches.

Table 4 : Regression of Determinant Factors

DV: Students Employability			
IVs:	Beta Coefficients	t	Sig
Leadership Skills	.346	4.781	.000
IT Literacy Skills	.257	3.822	.000
Teamwork Ability	.405	5.252	.000
$R^2 = 0.879$			

Hypothesis Test

Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to examine the hypotheses in this study. The results of hypotheses test were explained as followed:

- H1: There is a positive and significant effect of leadership skills on employability - Supported
- H2: Impact of IT literacy skills on employability is positive and significant - Supported
- H3: Teamwork ability positively and significantly affect employability - Supported

Discussion

The findings of the relationship and impact of leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability on internship students' employability were the fundamentals to achieve the main objective of this study. Leadership skills, IT literacy skills, teamwork ability and internship students' employability create a sense of success and advantages of internship students' competencies and their employability perspective in the industry. Internship students' employability allows employers to perceive in a pleasant manner that indicates high performance and competencies performed by the students during their attachments in industries for practical training. It was found from this study that leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability have a significant effect on internship students' employability. Competencies equipped and showed by those students will normally have high effectiveness and quality of tasks performed to the industries.

In addition, skilful and engagement characteristics displayed by the internship students play a meaningful role in predicting their employability. On the other hand, the research established that competency elements did act as antecedents as well on internship students' employability as perceived by the employers' internship supervisors at their companies. The respondents claimed that there will be a low effect on employability if the students neglect to focus on strategies such as leadership, IT literacy and teamwork ability in performing their works at industrial training places. Talented leadership, skilful IT and participation based teamwork practice would be fighting the tendency of low students' employability perceptions among the employers. Highly sensitive to the employers needs and perceptions are the essential implications of industrial students' competencies that lead to high industrial training authentic performance and serve the best to the employers. Thus, this contributes to the highly positive employers' perceptions and acceptance solutions. The results of this study were supported by previous research by Suarta et al. (2017) and Bhati & Khan (2022) which had proven that leadership skills had a direct significant impact on their employability. For the impact of IT literacy skills on employability, research by Bejaković & Mrnjavac (2020) and McDougall et al. (2018) support this finding. While, other findings by Ogbonnaya et al. (2018), Khawama et al. (2017), and Sanyal & Hisam (2018).had proven that internship students' teamwork ability promote their employability as well.

Contributions and Recommendations

The study shares some new ideas in the field of employability in the context of internship students. Therefore, it would be significant for future study and higher learning institutions to take the consideration from the following discussions. Future researchers should further conduct the study to use more relevant respondents to improve consistency of the results. In terms of theoretical implication, this study had proven the effect of leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability on internship students' employability. The employer will be more comfortable and satisfied if the students are able to demonstrate their leadership skills, IT literacy skills and participate seriously in teamwork. These are the most influential determinants in this research which have revealed that employability among the internship students is successfully yielded. The study also recommends strategies for improving students' employability for students themselves and higher education providers. Such strategies are the management needs to provide a concrete employability competencies training and development in terms of leadership skill, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability to be equipped by the students before they attend the internship sessions. Besides, the students also should market and portray themselves with those characteristics during the session progression because this is the determinant basis for having trusted employers who are benefited from the quality and competent students and finally disclose high level of employability among them. Apart of that, the findings also may be meaningful as awareness to other related parties such as the employees of higher education providers in giving fully support and action to the nurture of employability competencies among the students as emphasized by the management.

Conclusion

This study fully attained its targeted objectives. The findings revealed that leadership skills, IT literacy skills and teamwork ability have positive and significant impacts on internship students' employability. The study proposes that further consideration based on students' employability needs should be given by higher education institutions in serving them as internship students. This will enable the employability characteristics to be performed perfectly to the internship employers. Employers are likely to feel satisfied with their internship students when there are excellent skills and quality personality (leadership skills, IT literacy skills and

teamwork ability) presented to them. In principle, those who are involved in higher education institutions should be motivated to their jobs and sensitive to the employability needs of their internship students and future graduates. When this happens, they will put a creative initiative of their works by portraying their competencies. Finally, there will be a result of the high employability potential perceived by the employers.

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