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## LIFE SATISFACTION, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND WORK READINESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Phyleecia Chong Sze Jing<sup>1</sup>, Guan Teik Ee<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Psychology & Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah  
Email: psjchong@pilley.edu.my

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Psychology & Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah  
Email: guanteikee@ums.edu.my

\* Corresponding Author

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### Abstract:

Today's workplace needs highly skilled workers and work readiness is important as it is used to predict how much students perform in the future in terms of competency. Life satisfaction is a measure of quality of life and many studies show that it influences work readiness. As for academic achievement, the more students scored in the examination, indicating that they attain more knowledge and skills learned. In Borneo, there is still a lack of studies being carried out to investigate these three factors. Thus the aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between life satisfaction and work readiness; and academic achievement and work readiness. Two measures were used, i.e. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLC) and Work Readiness Inventory (WRI). As for academic achievement, cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of the past semester was used. The participants were 265 undergraduate students. Results showed that life satisfaction has a positive correlation with all aspects of work readiness except self-view. Results also showed that there was no significant correlation between academic achievement and work readiness with all the 6 aspects of work readiness. Academic achievement no doubt is important, but it does not have a correlation with work readiness in this study, suggesting that there are other variables, probably like on-site training such as practicum and internship are important to get students ready for work.

### Keywords:

Life Satisfaction, Work Readiness, Undergraduate Students

## Introduction

Undergraduate students are mostly ages from 18 to 24, they are in the stage of exploration according to Super (1990). In this stage, they explore the different types of work and find their place in the world of work. Those who have career maturity are able to identify their interests, abilities and hobbies. They may also be able to narrow down the types of job they would like to pursue. However, many students who enter university still do not know their career path. Many of them only get information about their future job when they set foot in the university. Some even wait until graduation year. Many of them feel worried upon graduation as they fear that they are unable to get the job they want.

COVID-19 pandemic makes the situation getting worse as unemployment is increasing. Companies are trying to downsize and retrench workers in order to cut costs and survive during this recession time, making finding a job even more difficult for fresh graduates. Companies need to make sure that those who are potentially to be hired will be productive. If a graduate has a good readiness for work, he/she also possesses adequate skills and knowledge for work. It can be said that they are competent. Super (1990) believed that everyone has a role to play when work is concerned. Some students plan early so that they can get the job they want (Sharf, 2013). As a consequence, if an individual is more well-prepared, they are better in work readiness. Thus, work readiness is a good variable to be studied.

Life satisfaction is a subjective assessment based on how individuals perceive their quality of life (Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 2001). Individuals will be more persistent and optimistic if they have higher life satisfaction (Ünüvar, Avşaroğlu, & Uslu, 2012.) This is because they are positive enough to face the adversaries. Even though they have been rejected in applying for a job, they are not easily giving up. They are seen to be bold enough to get what they want in life.

Academic achievement is a measure of knowledge gained from educational institutions. It is always indicated by examination marks, grades and grade point average. Most of us assume good academic achievement means better skills, therefore predicting better job prospects and performance. To date, there is still a scarcity of studies examining life satisfaction, academic achievement and work readiness among undergraduate students in Malaysia, especially in Borneo. Hence, it is important to investigate these three variables to determine how true the facts are in relation to the three variables mentioned. As students have to be well prepared in order to start a career as well as to contribute to the economy of a nation.

## Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness

Recent years there are an increasing number of studies relating to various psychological factors and work readiness. One of them is life satisfaction. It is probably when students are more satisfied with their life, they are happier to learn, making them more confident with knowledge and skills they attain in their studies. This in turn helps them become better ready for work as the ultimate goal of student readiness for work is to prepare them for the future (Yun Dai et al., 2020).

Magnano et al. (2021) made the conclusion that university needs to increase the level of well-being (which includes life satisfaction, courage, and flourishing) in order to make a smooth transition for work. Magnano et al. (2021) study indicated that these psychological resources and transformation to the labor market are interrelated. Students will see their future negatively

if they are not happy. They may even feel hopeless when they do not have life satisfaction when in university. Psychological resources can become motivational forces for them to cope with future vocational development tasks. This is why studies about positive psychology in terms of well-being and quality of life are increasing, as life satisfaction can predict how well an individual will perform in terms of work in the future.

Work behavior requires a positive mental attitude, and this mental attitude is a reaction to environmental situations, such as life satisfaction. Therefore Octavian-Anwar, Putranto and Wibawanto (2021) suggested that the higher contribution of good mental attitude towards the environment, the better the work readiness. Controlling feelings in psychological well-being can promote good work readiness because work behaviour needs positive mental health when students face challenges in the environment.

### **Academic Achievement and Work Readiness**

Academic achievement is the result of students going through examinations after a period of learning (Kurniawan, et al., 2020). People with good academic achievement usually assume that they have mastered the knowledge and skills learned (Octavian-Anwar, Putranto & Wibawanto, 2021) in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Thus, they are more prepared for work (Kurniawan, et al., 2020). This is especially true when Kurniawan et al. (2020) investigated academic achievement and work readiness in a university in Indonesia, in which they found a very strong correlation between both variables.

A study from Feriady and Yanto (2018) suggested that academic achievement did not influence student engagement but had a significant influence on work readiness. They further suggested that an internship program during studies could effectively help in work readiness.

A study from Solfema, Wahid, and Pamungkas, (2019) suggested that a student's achievement motivation has a significant relationship with work readiness. This is because good achievement also means individuals possess abilities in the field they studied, thus they have better capacity to perform a task, therefore are more ready for work.

Ghosh et al. (2019) found a positive correlation between life satisfaction and work readiness among veteran students. However, they found no relationship between academic achievement and work readiness.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are:

1. What is the life satisfaction level among undergraduate students?
2. What is the work readiness level among undergraduate students?
3. Is there any relationship between life satisfaction and work readiness?
4. Is there any relationship between academic achievement and work readiness?

### **Methodology**

A random sampling was drawn from a faculty in a public university in Borneo, East Malaysia. The participants were 265 final year students (18-24 year-old). Google Form was used to collect the data. Researchers took about nine weeks to collect the data. Researchers performed the data screening and cleaning before it was analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

The instruments used were Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) and Work Readiness Inventory (Brady, 2010).

### ***Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)***

The SWLS is a 7-point Likert scale with only 5 items. The range is from 1- strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree. Total scores were computed with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction in life and vice-versa.

Diener et al.(1985) reported that SWLS has high internal consistency with a coefficient alpha of .87 for the scale and a 2-month test-retest stability coefficient of .82.

### ***Work Readiness Inventory (WRI)***

The WRI has 6 aspects of work readiness namely Responsibility, Flexibility, Skills, Communication, Self-View, and Health & Safety. Each aspect has 6 items, a total of 36 items. The range is from 1= not concerned to 5= very concerned on a 5-point Likert scale. Total scores were computed with higher scores indicating higher readiness and vice-versa.

Bradly (2010) reported that the WRI has strong internal consistency, stability and reliability.

### ***Academic Achievement***

Cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of the past semester was used to indicate students' academic achievement.

## ***Results***

The results are presented as below:

### ***Students' Life Satisfaction Level***

Table 1 showed the frequency and percentage of students' life satisfaction level. The most endorsed by students was "satisfied" with life, endorsed by 34.7% (92) of the participants; the second most endorsed by participants was "slightly satisfied" with life, endorsed by 29.1% (77) of the participants. The third most endorsed by students was "extremely satisfied" with life, endorsed by 12.1% (32) of the participants. Nobody endorsed "extremely dissatisfied" with life.

**Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Life Satisfaction Level**

<b>Life Satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Extremely Satisfied	32	12.1
Satisfied	92	34.7
Slightly Satisfied	77	29.1
Neutral	12	4.5
Slightly Dissatisfied	30	11.3
Dissatisfied	22	8.3
Extremely Dissatisfied	0	0
Total	265	100

### ***Students' Work Readiness Level***

Table 2 showed the frequency and percentage of students' work readiness level. There were 5 aspects of work readiness namely Responsibility, Flexibility, Skills, Communication, Self-View, and Health & Safety.

If the participants checked “Very Concerned,” indicating that they have “high ready” for the particular aspect of work readiness. If the participants checked “Concerned” indicating that they have “ready” in the particular aspect of work readiness. If the participants checked “Somewhat Concerned,” indicating that they have “somewhat ready” in the particular aspect of work readiness. If the participants checked “A little concerned,” indicating that they have “a little ready” in the particular aspect of work readiness, and lastly, if the participants checked “Not Concerned,” indicating that they have “not ready” in the particular aspect of work readiness.

Table 2 showed the highest readiness for Responsibility was endorsed by about 44.2% (117) of the participants, followed by 39.2% (104), then 16.6% (44) of the participants, and no one endorsed a little ready and not ready for the Responsibility aspect.

Table 2 also showed the highest readiness for Flexibility was endorsed by about 35.1% (93) of the participants, followed by 52.5% (139), then 9.8% (26), and 2.6% (7) of the participants, and no one endorsed not ready for the Flexibility aspect.

Table 2 also showed the highest readiness for Skills was endorsed by about 58.9% (156) of the participants, followed by 41.1% (109), no one endorsed somewhat ready, a little ready and not ready for the Skills aspect.

Table 2 also showed the highest readiness for Communication was endorsed by about 52.8% (140) of the participants, followed by 47.2% (125), no one endorsed somewhat ready, a little ready and not ready for the Communication aspect.

Table 2 also showed the highest readiness for Self-view was endorsed by about 11.7% (31) of the participants, followed by 46.0% (122), then 30.2% (80), 7.9% (21), and 4.2% (11) of the participants endorsed for the Self-View aspect.

Table 2 also showed the highest readiness for Health & Safety was endorsed by about 54.3% (144) of the participants, followed by 31.3% (83), then 14.3% (38) of the participants, and no one endorsed somewhat ready, a little ready and not ready for the Health & Safety aspect.

In conclusion, the majority of the participants are ready to work for every aspect.

**Table 2: Level of Readiness for Each Aspect of Work Readiness**

Level of Concern	Responsibility	Flexibility	Skills	Communication	Self-View	Health & Safety
<b>High ready</b>	117 (44.2%)	93 (35.1%)	156 (58.9%)	140 (52.8%)	31 (11.7%)	144(54.3%)
<b>Ready</b>	104 (39.2%)	139 (52.5%)	109 (41.1%)	125 (47.2%)	122 (46.0%)	83 (31.3%)
<b>Somewhat Ready</b>	44 (16.6%)	26 (9.8%)	0	0	80 (30.2%)	38 (14.3%)
<b>A Little Ready</b>	0	7 (2.6%)	0	0	21 (7.9%)	0
<b>Not Ready</b>	0	0	0	0	11 (4.2%)	0
<b>Total</b>	265 (100%)	265 (100%)	265 (100%)	265 (100%)	265 (100%)	265 (100%)

**Relationship between Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness**

Relationship between life satisfaction and work readiness was tested by Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Results from Table 3 showed that there were positive relationships between life satisfaction and work readiness across all aspects i.e. Responsibility ( $r = .218, p = .000$ ); Flexibility ( $r = .205, p = .000$ ), Skills ( $r = .283, p = .000$ ), Communication ( $r = .468, p = .000$ ), Health and Safety ( $r = .373, p = .000$ ). Only Self-View showed a negative relationship with life satisfaction ( $r = -.044, p = .475$ ).

These results also indicate that life satisfaction and work readiness for Communication and Health & Safety aspects have positive medium strength correlation; whereas life satisfaction and work readiness for Responsibility, Flexibility and Skills aspects have positive small strength correlation. Lastly, life satisfaction and work readiness for the Self-View aspect has negative small strength correlation (Cohen,1988).

**Table 3: Life Satisfaction and Work Readiness**

		<b>R<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>F<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>S<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>C<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>S-V<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>H&amp;S<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Life Satisfaction</b>
<b>R<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)	<i>1</i>						.218**
<b>F<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)		<i>1</i>					.205**
<b>S<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)			<i>1</i>				.283**
<b>C<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)				<i>1</i>			.468**
<b>S-V<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)					<i>1</i>		-.044
<b>H&amp;S<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)						<i>1</i>	.373**
<b>Life Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation (sig. 2-tailed)							<i>1</i>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

<sup>1</sup> R=Responsibility; F= Flexibility; S= Skills; C= Communication; S-V= Self-View; H&S= Health & Safety

**Academic Achievement and Work Readiness among Undergraduate Students**

Relationship between academic achievement and work readiness was tested by Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Table 4 showed none of the aspect of work readiness had a significant correlation between academic achievement, be it Responsibility ( $r = -.004, p = .952$ ); Flexibility ( $r = .017, p = .787$ ); Skills ( $r = -.017, p = .779$ ); Communications ( $r = -.038, p = .537$ ); Self-View ( $r = -.041, p = .507$ ); and Health & Safety ( $r = .001, p = .991$ ).

**Table 4 : Academic Achievement and Work Readiness**

		<b>R<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>F<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>S<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>C<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>S-V<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>H &amp; S<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Academic Achievement</b>
<b>R<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson	1						-.004
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.952
<b>F<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson		1					.017
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.787
<b>S<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson			1				-.017
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.779
<b>C<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson				1			-.038
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.537
<b>S-V<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson					1		-.041
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.507
<b>H&amp;S<sup>1</sup></b>	Pearson						1	.001
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.991
<b>Academic Achievement</b>	Pearson							1
	Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

<sup>1</sup> R=Responsibility; F= Flexibility; S= Skills; C= Communication; S-V= Self-View; H&S= Health & Safety

## Discussion

This study provided some understanding of the relationship between life satisfaction and work readiness as well as academic achievement and work readiness.

Life satisfaction is positively correlated with work readiness in all aspects except self-view. This implies that when life satisfaction is high, the work readiness is also high. This is especially true for communication, and health & safety which shows a bigger strength of correlation. This study implied that the more satisfied students are with their lives, the better they are in communication. This could be due to them having more confidence in conveying what they think. This includes better self-efficacy and boldness in trying to use the knowledge and skills they attain in their studies (Yun Dai et al., 2020). Magnano et al. (2021) also suggested that the level of well-being can be a motivational force for students to cope with the future vocational development tasks. This study also implies that when students have more life satisfaction, they are more concerned about health and safety in the workplace. This is absolutely logical as only health and safety can allow people to continue working without fearing about their lives being threatened.

Out of all the aspects, only life satisfaction and self-view has a negative relationship. This probably indicates that even though students are satisfied with their life, they do not see themselves high. Probably the majority of this group of students do not have high self-esteem or self-concept and do not believe in their own capabilities that they can handle a good job.

As most of the studies postulated that academic achievement has a relationship with work readiness, surprisingly this study suggested that academic achievement does not have any relationship with work readiness in all the aspects, be it Responsibility, Flexibility, Skills, Communications, Self-View and Health & Safety. One of the possible answers is this group of students do not relate what they learn in the classroom with their future job. In other words, learning in the classroom is still not enough for them to gain enough knowledge and skills for work readiness. This implies that students need more on-site training such as practicum and internship to have work readiness. This study supported Ghosh et al. (2019) where they mentioned even though life satisfaction has a relationship with work readiness but not academic achievement. Qualifications do not solely determine work readiness for future employment.

### Conclusion

This study depicted that life satisfaction has a positive relationship with most aspects of work readiness. This study also showed that academic achievement is not related to work readiness. These two points gave us a main clue that universities should improve the well-being of students instead of emphasizing on academic results alone. University administrators should make the university “home” for students so that they are happy to study on campus. If their life satisfaction is good, it will certainly increase their work readiness, so as to empower them to thrive in the future workplace and function as productive adults (Lau, Baranovich, & Leong, 2018).

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### Corresponding Author

Guan Teik Ee\*

Faculty of Psychology and Education,

Universiti Malaysia Sabah,

Jalan UMS, 88400, Kota Kinabalu

Malaysia.

Email: guanteikee@ums.edu.my

Handphone no: +60-019-4171285

Fax no: +60-088-320101

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