

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MODERN EDUCATION
(IJMOE)**www.gaexcellence.com/ijmoe**READY4CAREER MODEL FOR GEN Z EMPLOYABILITY
AND CAREER READINESS**

Siti Balkis Mohamed Ibrahim^{1*}, Nur Salimah Alias², Wan Nor Ashiqin Wan Ali³, Izati Nabila Marzuki⁴, Farah Zahidah Abdullah⁵

¹Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

 sitibalkis@unimap.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1390-866X>

²Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

 salimah@unimap.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6256-9302>

³Faculty of Intelligent Computing, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

 ashiqinali@unimap.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2489-2843>

⁴Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

 izatinabila@unimap.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6740-7655>

⁵Faculty of Business & Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia

 farahzahidah@unimap.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0486-0928>

*Corresponding Author

Article Info:**Article history:**

Received date: 29.04.2026

Revised date: 14.05.2026

Accepted date: 28.06.2026

Published date: 30.06.2026

To cite this document:

Ibrahim, S. B. M., Alias, N. S., Ali, W. N. A. W., Marzuki, I. N., & Abdullah, F. Z. (2026). Ready4career Model for Gen Z Employability and Career Readiness. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 8(30), 883-895.

Abstract:

Rapid changes of labour market were driven by digitalisation, post-pandemic disruptions, and evolving generational characteristics have intensified challenges surrounding graduate employability, particularly among Generation Z. In the Malaysian context, graduates increasingly encounter psychological vulnerability, unclear professional identity, limited career literacy, and difficulties in workplace transition, which collectively contribute to persistent underemployment and early career instability. These realities underscore the necessity for a holistic and development-oriented career readiness framework that extends beyond conventional technical and skill-based models. This study proposes the Ready4Career Model, a seven-dimensional developmental framework comprising Discovery (Self-Discovery), Identity (Professional Identity), Affect (Emotional Stability), Mastery (Resume and CV Mastery), Occupational Literacy (Career Literacy), Navigational Readiness (Interview and Workplace Transition), and Development (Continuous Growth). Grounded in Career Construction Theory, the model conceptualises career development as a dynamic and continuous process shaped by self-regulation, identity construction, adaptability, and lifelong learning. Employing a qualitative conceptual methodology through structured narrative synthesis of contemporary international

and Malaysian literature published between 2020 and 2025, this study systematically integrates psychological, educational, and employability perspectives into a coherent framework. The findings highlight the model's theoretical coherence, contextual relevance, and practical applicability in enhancing emotional resilience, professional identity clarity, career adaptability, and graduate readiness. Overall, the Ready4Career Model provides an evergreen and adaptable framework to support higher education institutions, policymakers, and career practitioners in strengthening sustainable graduate employability within an increasingly complex employment scope.

DOI: 10.35631/IJMOE.830055

Keywords:

Career Readiness, Employability, Educational, Graduate, Generation Z, Self-Improvement



© The authors (2026). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact ijmoe@gaexcellence.com.

Introduction

The modern labour market is undergoing profound structural transformation, driven by rapid technological advancement, accelerated digitalisation, artificial intelligence integration, and shifting organisational expectations. These transitions have redefined the meaning of graduate employability, moving it beyond technical competence towards a more holistic construct covered psychological readiness, emotional stability, professional identity, adaptive learning capacity, and sustained career resilience. In this increasingly volatile employment environment, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are confronted with mounting pressure to prepare graduates who are not only occupationally skilled, but also emotionally grounded, self-aware, and capable of navigating complex career trajectories.

Despite intensified employability initiatives, a persistent and widening career readiness gap has emerged, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z) students. Recent global evidence indicates that Gen Z graduates exhibit heightened anxiety, diminished self-clarity, fragile emotional regulation, and limited workplace preparedness, largely shaped by pandemic-induced learning disruption, prolonged digital immersion, socio-economic uncertainty, and shifting social norms, (Adnan, Mahmood and Khudhair, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly restricted experiential learning opportunities, interpersonal socialisation, and professional exposure, resulting in deficits emotional development, communication competence, and career adaptability.

Empirical studies reveal that more than half of Gen Z students experience uncertainty regarding career direction, accompanied by reduced psychological confidence and limited sense of professional control. This uncertainty is compounded by deficits in essential employability competencies such as effective communication, self-advocacy, critical questioning, emotional

regulation, and adaptive learning strategies, which have been shown to be central to workplace success yet often underdeveloped among Generation Z graduates (Mohammed & Ozdamli, 2024; Visser & Terblanche, 2025). Simultaneously, industry leaders in Malaysia have expressed concern over gaps and shortcomings in key interpersonal and professional competencies among graduates, coined by Osman, Ibrahim, Mohd, Hashim, & Ahmad (2025).

In aspect of from psychosocial perspective, Gen Z is uniquely shaped by what scholars describe as the “five Cs”: COVID-19, climate anxiety, cost-of-living pressures, cyberspace saturation, and geopolitical conflict. These converging stressors have significantly increased emotional vulnerability, anxiety prevalence, and psychological instability among youth populations, undermining their capacity for career adaptation and occupational resilience (Ismail, Rahman & Abdullah, 2023; Rahman & Hamzah, 2024). Concurrently, prolonged digital immersion and algorithm-driven social media engagement could reduce opportunities for authentic interpersonal interaction, emotional maturation, and conflict management skill development.

In Malaysian higher education context, these global trends manifest through rising graduate underemployment, premature career disengagement, workplace maladjustment, and declining early-career satisfaction. Although national policies emphasise employability enhancement, prevailing intervention strategies remain predominantly skill-centric, fragmented, and short-term oriented. Such approaches inadequately address the deeper psychological and identity-based dimensions that fundamentally shape career sustainability. Consequently, graduates may secure employment but struggle to maintain emotional stability, professional coherence, and adaptive growth, ultimately limiting long-term employability trajectories.

On the other hand, persistent concerns regarding graduate underemployment, early career instability, and limited workplace adaptability highlight enduring gaps in holistic career readiness, particularly among Gen Z batches (MOHE, 2024; TalentCorp, 2023). Department of Statistic Malaysia (2024) coined national tracer studies further indicate that deficits in emotional regulation, professional communication, and career planning remain significant barriers to sustainable employability. These trends collectively underscore the urgency of developing an integrative, development-oriented framework to strengthen graduate career preparedness.

Furthermore, the accelerating integration of artificial intelligence into educational and workplace ecosystems introduces additional complexity. While Gen Z demonstrates high digital fluency and adaptability to emerging technologies, recent studies highlight increasing concerns about ethical ambiguity, anxiety related to occupational displacement and lowered self-efficacy in navigating AI-driven career scopes (World Economic Forum, 2023; Salem, 2025). This paradox of technological confidence and psychological vulnerability highlights the urgent necessity for structured developmental frameworks that foster consciousness, self-awareness, emotional resilience, identity coherence, and adaptive career navigation.

Thus, an **Ready4Career Model** is conceptualised to address the fundamental inadequacies of existing employability paradigms. The model reconceptualises career readiness as a holistic developmental continuum, integrating seven interdependent dimensions; Self-Discovery, Professional Identity, Emotional Stability, Mastery of Resume and CV, Career Literacy, Interview and Workplace Transition, and Continues Development.

Ultimately, this model responds not merely to employability demands, but to the broader developmental needs of Gen Z and future cohorts, fostering resilient, self-directed, and adaptively competent individuals capable of sustaining meaningful career trajectories across the lifespan.

Background Of Study

The rapid evolution of the global labour market, influenced by digital transformation, automation, and shifting organisational demands, has fundamentally altered the competencies required of university graduates. Employers increasingly prioritise not only technical skills but also emotional intelligence, adaptability, professional identity, and lifelong learning capabilities. However, many HEI continue to emphasise disciplinary knowledge and short-term employability outcomes, often neglecting the deeper psychological and developmental aspects essential for sustainable career success.

Gen Z graduates, in particular, face unique challenges caused by digital immersion, pandemic-related disruptions, and socio-economic uncertainties. These factors contribute to increased emotional vulnerability, identity fragmentation, and limited career adaptability. Malaysian graduate tracer studies reveal persistent underemployment, skills mismatch, and early career instability, highlighting gaps in career literacy, emotional regulation, and workplace preparedness. Employers echo these concerns, frequently noting deficiencies in graduates' emotional intelligence, professional communication, and resilience.

Current employability programs in Malaysia often adopt fragmented approaches, focusing on skill acquisition without integrating psychological readiness and identity formation. Such interventions fall short in preparing graduates for the complex, uncertain, and dynamic nature of contemporary careers. This underscores the need for a holistic, developmentally informed framework that aligns personal growth with employability mastery.

The Ready4Career Model addresses these challenges by integrating seven interrelated dimensions, Discovery, Identity, Affect, Mastery, Occupational Literacy, Navigational Readiness, and Development into a cohesive framework. Grounded in Savickas' Career Construction Theory (2005), which views career development as an adaptive, meaning-making process, the model emphasises emotional regulation, professional identity coherence, and lifelong learning as foundational to career readiness. In Malaysian context, where policy agendas prioritise graduate employability and human capital development, this model offers a theoretically justified and practically applicable pathway to enhance sustainable career outcomes for Gen Z and beyond.

Literature Review

Graduate employability remains a persistent structural concern within Malaysia's higher education and labour market ecosystems. Recent national analyses reveal a widening mismatch between graduate qualifications and labour market outcomes. A labour market report reveals that over 60% of Malaysian degree holders earn below RM3,000 per month, with more than 70% employed in semi-skilled or low-skilled occupations, illustrating a persistent skills mismatch and underemployment challenge in the country (Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), 2024; TalentCorp Malaysia, 2023). These findings indicate that employability cannot

be reduced solely to academic attainment but also must encompass broader psychosocial, identity-based, and adaptive competencies.

Parallel evidence from Future Studies Berhad (2025) demonstrated that while official graduate employability rates exceed 80%, such statistics obscure the quality, stability, and skill relevance of employment obtained by graduates. The emergence of the so-called “*gaji cukup makan*” economy further exposes the fragility of graduate economic security and highlights the urgent need for holistic career preparedness interventions. Within this scope, Malaysian graduates increasingly confront occupational uncertainty, identity diffusion, and psychological strain, particularly during the early career transition phase.

Furthermore, empirical evidence further proves the necessity of a holistic career readiness framework for Gen Z and upcoming generations. Studies conducted among Malaysian graduates demonstrate that emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and personal attributes significantly influence employability outcomes, particularly during early career stages (Ismail, et al., 2023; Rahmat, Ahmad, & Zainal, 2024). Similarly, other investigations involving Malaysian Gen Z graduates reveal persistent challenges in professional identity formation, emotional resilience, career planning, and workplace adaptation, which collectively undermine long-term career sustainability (Hamzah, Khalid, & Othman, 2023). Evidence from technical universities further confirms that emotional intelligence serves as a critical moderating mechanism linking soft skills, personality traits, and employability performance, thereby highlighting the central role of psychological development in employability interventions (Yusof & Daud, 2022). Collectively, these findings underscore the multidimensional readiness gaps faced by Malaysian Gen Z graduates, reinforcing the academic and practical relevance of the Ready4Career Model as a structured developmental framework for sustainable career preparation.

To focus on, Gen Z constituting the majority of current university batches, faces distinctive developmental challenges shaped by digital saturation, economic volatility, and accelerated social change. Many empirical studies in Malaysian higher education contexts indicate that Gen Z students show elevated levels of career indecision, emotional vulnerability, and self-efficacy deficits, which collectively undermine career planning and employment readiness entirely (Rahman & Hamzah, 2024). These psychological and emotional dimensions significantly influence career adaptability, resilience, and persistence during employment transitions.

Moreover, emotional intelligence has been consistently associated with enhanced employability skills, workplace adjustment, and early career performance among Malaysian undergraduates (Salleh, Kamarulzaman, & Hamzah, 2022). Thus, emotional stability supports graduates in managing rejection, ambiguity, and performance pressures, while facilitating adaptive coping strategies in increasingly volatile labour markets. Consequently, employability frameworks that neglect emotional regulation and self-awareness risk producing technically competent yet psychologically fragile graduates. In addition, professional identity development represents another critical deficit within Malaysian graduate preparedness. Referring to Othman, Hashim, & Razak, (2023) reveal that many students graduate with limited clarity towards occupational pathways, workplace expectations, and professional role enactment. High tendencies they looking for jobs without any early preparations. This identity ambiguity contributes to job mismatch, low engagement, and early career attrition.

Moreover, occupational literacy, encompassing labour market awareness, career navigation competence, and employment strategy formulation, has emerged as a decisive predictor of graduate career success. Local research demonstrates that structured career literacy interventions significantly improve students' employment confidence, interview performance, and transition readiness (Yusoff, Noor, & Jalil, 2024). These findings reinforce the need for integrated career models that systematically cultivate identity coherence, labour market intelligence, and adaptive career planning capacities.

The Ready4Career Model is theoretically grounded in Career Construction Theory (CCT) proposed by Savickas (2005), which conceptualises career development as a dynamic process of meaning-making, identity negotiation, and adaptive regulation. CCT emphasises three core dimensions: vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes, all of which align coherently with the Ready4Career Model's seven developmental domains. By embedding emotional stability, identity formation, occupational literacy, and navigational readiness within a continuous developmental cycle, the model operationalises CCT principles in a pedagogically actionable format suitable for Malaysian higher education scopes.

Furthermore, incorporating empirical and theoretical insights, the Ready4Career Model responds directly to Malaysia's evolving graduate employability crisis. It offers a holistic, integrative, and developmentally progressive framework that transcends conventional skills-based employability models. By simultaneously strengthening psychological readiness, professional identity coherence, emotional regulation, and career navigation competence, the model aligns academic development with labour market realities and socio-emotional resilience.

Within Malaysia's increasingly complex employment environment, such a multidimensional framework is not merely supplementary but foundational in cultivating graduates who are adaptable, reflective, and sustainably employable. The model thus represents a theoretically grounded and contextually responsive intervention capable of enhancing graduate readiness, employability sustainability, and long-term career resilience.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative conceptual research design to develop and articulate the Ready4Career Model as a conceptual holistic framework for enhancing graduate employability and career readiness among Gen Z students in Malaysia. Conceptual methodology is particularly appropriate for theory development and model construction, as it facilitates the systematic integration of empirical evidence, theoretical insights, and contextual realities into a coherent explanatory framework (Jaakkola, 2020). Given the multidimensional and evolving nature of employability challenges within the Malaysian higher education scope, this approach enables a comprehensive and contextually grounded model formulation.

The research process involved a structured narrative review of contemporary literature published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on graduate employability, career development, emotional intelligence, professional identity formation, and career adaptability, with particular emphasis on Malaysian and Southeast Asian contexts. Key academic databases, including indexed journals from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and My-Cite, were systematically tested, alongside national policy reports and labour market analytics issued during the same period by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE), the

Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), and Future Studies Berhad. These sources were critically analysed to identify recurring constructs, developmental patterns, and contextual challenges shaping Generation Z career readiness.

Through iterative thematic synthesis and theoretical mapping, seven core developmental domains were identified and integrated into the model framework. The model was subsequently anchored in Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005) to ensure conceptual coherence and alignment, developmental continuity, and theoretical validity. This analytical synthesis culminated in the formulation of an integrative, adaptive, and context-sensitive model designed to support holistic student development and sustainable employability outcomes.

Model Development

The development and formulation of Ready4Career Model, a conceptual holistic developmental framework designed to systematically enhance graduate employability and career readiness among Gen Z students. Collectively, these dimensions constitute a comprehensive career development ecosystem that addresses the cognitive, emotional, psychological, behavioural, and occupational competencies required for sustainable career success in contemporary labour markets and future betterment.

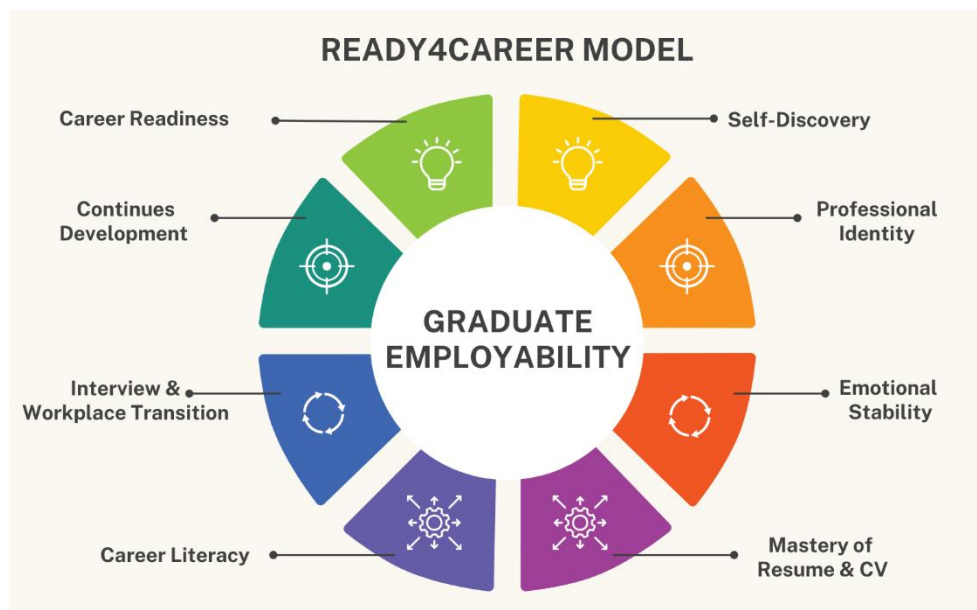


Figure 1: Ready4Career Model

The self-discovery dimension represents the foundational phase of the model, emphasising reflective self-exploration, values clarification, interest identification, and strengths recognition. Empirical studies indicate that Malaysian students frequently exhibit limited self-awareness and unclear career aspirations, leading to indecision, low motivation, and mismatched employment outcomes (Othman et al., 2023; Yusoff et al., 2024). By systematically embedding self-discovery processes, the model enables students to develop orderly career narratives, realistic occupational goals, and intrinsic motivation, which are essential for sustained engagement in career development activities.

The second dimension, Professional Identity. It focuses on the construction of a coherent professional self-concept. Professional identity formation enables students to internalise occupational values, ethical standards, role expectations, and career aspirations. In the Malaysian scope, identity diffusion remains prevalent among undergraduates, contributing to uncertainty, job dissatisfaction, and early career turnover (Salleh et al., 2022). By nurturing professional identity development, the model supports students in aligning personal aspirations with occupational roles, thereby fostering psychological ownership, work engagement, and long-term career commitment.

Next, emotional stability dimension reflects the growing recognition of emotional intelligence and psychological resilience for students as core employability competencies. Gen Z students are particularly susceptible to emotional dysregulation, academic stress, and career anxiety, which negatively affect decision-making, adaptability, and performance (Ismail et al., 2023; Rahman & Hamzah, 2024). Integrating emotional regulation, coping strategies, and self-efficacy development into the model enhances students' capacity to navigate uncertainty, manage rejection, and also sustain motivation across complex career transitions. Emotional stability thus functions as a critical mediating factor between skill acquisition and employability outcomes.

Mastery of resume and curriculum vitae (CV) dimension emphasises the differences between resume and CV, development of technical career competencies, including resume writing, CV development, interview communication, and professional presentation. Despite academic achievements, many Malaysian graduates remain inadequately prepared to articulate their competencies and experiences effectively in competitive recruitment contexts (Yusoff et al., 2024). This dimension bridges the persistent gap between academic learning and employment communication, thereby enhancing students' market visibility and recruitment success (the end process).

Career literacy dimension extends beyond surface-level labour market awareness on conditions to encompass occupational intelligence, employment pathway mapping, and strategic career planning. Local studies confirm that students with higher levels of career literacy demonstrate stronger career confidence, decision-making clarity, and employment adaptability (Othman et al., 2023). Thus, by embedding structured occupational literacy development, the model equips students with the awareness required to interpret labour market signals, anticipate industry shifts, and formulate adaptive career strategies for future betterment.

The interview and workplace transition dimension pinpoints the critical transition from academic environments to professional ecosystems. This stage encompasses interview competence, workplace etiquette, organisational socialisation, adaptability, and early career resilience. Empirical findings highlight that Malaysian graduates frequently experience cultural shock, performance anxiety, and adjustment difficulties during early employment phases, which contribute to reduced productivity and premature job exit (Future Studies Berhad, 2025). The inclusion of navigational readiness within the model ensures smoother academic-to-work transitions, enhanced workplace confidence, and sustainable employment integration.

Finally, continues development dimension compresses lifelong learning, reflective practice, upskilling, and professional adaptability. This dimension renders the Ready4Career Model an evergreen conceptual framework, capable of continuous application across different life stages, career transitions, and labour market evolutions. In an era characterised by technological

disruption and occupational fluidity, graduates must continuously regulate competencies and career strategies (World Economic Forum, 2023). Thus, by immersing continuous development as a core pillar, the model transcends episodic career preparation and supports enduring employability resilience. Last but not least, the model assists graduate towards the preparations on career readiness.

Collectively, these seven dimensions form a dynamic, repeated, and non-linear developmental cycle, reflecting the principles of Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005). The model's structural design enables recursive engagement, whereby individuals may revisit earlier dimensions in response to evolving career contexts, thereby ensuring sustained relevance and adaptability. Within the Malaysian higher education ecosystem, the Ready4Career Model offers a theoretically grounded, empirically informed, and pedagogically actionable framework capable of addressing contemporary employability challenges while remaining responsive to future workforce transformations.

Conclusion and Future Direction

The Ready4Career Model presents a comprehensive and integrative conceptual developmental framework designed to address the multifaceted challenges confronting Gen Z graduates in Malaysia as their transition from academic settings to complex and rapidly evolving professional scopes. Encircle seven interconnected dimensions, Self-Discovery, Professional Identity, Emotional Stability, Mastery of Resume and CV, Career Literacy, Interview and Workplace Transition, and Continuous Development.

In order to emphasis the model itself, it ends with the self-development towards career readiness. That's niche of the model. Moreover, the model conceptual holistically captures the psychological, emotional, cognitive, and practical competencies essential for sustainable career readiness and lifelong employability. Anchored in Career Construction Theory, the model emphasizes the dynamic process of career meaning-making, adaptive identity formation, and continuous growth, thereby responding effectively to the emergent vulnerabilities and developmental gaps identified within the Malaysian graduate batches.

As mentioned, many evidence show Malaysia underscores persistent challenges such as limited self-awareness, professional identity diffusion, emotional instability, insufficient occupational literacy, and difficulties in workplace transition among graduates. These issues have consequential impacts on employability outcomes, including job mismatch, early career depreciation, and the consequences will reduce entire work productivity. The Ready4Career Model addresses these systemic gaps by offering an evergreen, theoretically sound, and contextually concerning framework that can be integrated into higher education curricula, institutional career services, and national employability initiatives. Its design encourages engagement with developmental domains, ensuring adaptability across career stages and evolving labour market demands.

Future research should empirically validate the Ready4Career Model through longitudinal and mixed-method studies involving diverse Malaysian university populations. Moreover, quantitative instruments can be developed to measure the model's seven dimensions and their predictive power on career outcomes, while qualitative inquiries can deepen understanding of contextual nuances and individual experiences. In addition, intervention studies are recommended to test the efficacy of structured career development programs based on the

model within university environment. Also, in order to provide valuable comparative insights, it can be expanded the model's application to other Southeast Asian contexts.

In a nutshell, the Ready4Career Model offers a robust, actionable, and sustainable framework to guide Gen Z graduates in Malaysia towards enhanced career readiness and resilience. Its comprehensive nature ensures that graduates are not only equipped with employability skills but also empowered with psychological and emotional capacities to navigate an uncertain and dynamic professional future. As such, this model holds significant promise for informing policy, pedagogy, and practices aimed at strengthening entire national human capital development and supporting the socio-economic advancement of Malaysia.

-
- Acknowledgements:** The authors gratefully acknowledge the support and cooperation of Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) in facilitating and contributing to the successful completion of this research. There is no external funding was received for this study work. In aspect of consent to participate, all participants received information about the study and provided verbally informed consent prior to participation. Consent for Publication is not applicable for this study.
- Funding Statement:** No Funding
- Conflict of Interest Statement:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have contributed to this work and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission to the International Journal of Modern Education (IJMOE).
- Ethics Statement:** This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority prior to data collection. All participants received clear information about the study's purpose and procedures and provided informed consent before participation. Participation was voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and all responses were securely handled to protect participant privacy. The data were used solely for academic and research purposes in compliance with applicable ethical guidelines.
- Author Contribution Statement:** All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript.
Dr. Wan Ashiqin was responsible for the methodology, data analysis dan interpretation of results.
Siti Balkis handled introduction, problem statement and background of study.
Dr. Nur Salimah contributed to the literature review, drafting, and critical revision of the manuscript.
Ts. Dr. Izati Nabila handled the conceptualization, conclusion and future direction of the study.
Farah Zahida updated technical formatting of manuscript and proofread. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.
-

References

- Adnan, A. A. Z., Mahmood, A., & Khudhair, F. S. (2024). The characteristics of employers preferred by Gen-Z after the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 225–229. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.ICAME2419>
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). (2024). Labour force survey report. <https://www.dosm.gov.my>
- Future Studies Berhad. (2025). Graduate employability and workplace readiness report. Kuala Lumpur: *Future Studies Berhad*.
- Hamzah, N. A., Khalid, N. H., & Othman, R. (2023). Challenges in professional identity and career adaptability among Malaysian Generation Z graduates. *Journal of Career Development and Sustainability*, 10(2), 112–130.
- Ismail, N. A., Rahman, N. A., & Abdullah, S. (2023). Emotional intelligence and career adaptability among Malaysian undergraduates: A mediating role of self-efficacy. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 37(2), 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-11-2021-0517>
- Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: Four approaches. *AMS Review*, 10(1-2), 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0>
- Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE). (2024). Malaysia education blueprint 2021–2030 (higher education). Putrajaya: MOHE.
- Mohammed, F. S., & Ozdamli, F. (2024). A systematic literature review of soft skills in information technology education. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(10), 894. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14100894>
- Osman, F., Ibrahim, N., Mohd, R., Hashim, S., & Ahmad, L. (2025). Employer perspectives on interpersonal and professional skill gaps among Malaysian graduates. *Malaysian Journal of Workforce Development*, 11(2), 134–150.
- Othman, R., Ahmad, A., & Ibrahim, F. (2023). Career readiness and employability skills of Malaysian university students: A qualitative study. *Journal of Career Development*, 50(1), 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453221084491>
- Othman, R., Hashim, H., & Razak, A. (2023). Understanding graduate preparedness: Occupational clarity and professional role enactment among Malaysian university students. *Journal of Career Development and Education*, 15(2), 89–105.
- Rahman, N. A., & Hamzah, N. (2024). Psychological distress and career anxiety among Malaysian undergraduates: The moderating role of resilience. *Malaysian Journal of Psychology*, 38(1), 55–70.
- Rahmat, N. F., Ahmad, M. N., & Zainal, N. H. (2024). The influence of personal attributes and emotional intelligence on employability among Malaysian graduates. *Malaysian Journal of Psychology*, 39(1), 45–60.
- Salleh, K. M., Kamarulzaman, N., & Hamzah, N. (2022). The impact of emotional intelligence on employability and workplace adjustment among Malaysian undergraduates. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(3), 197–209. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12432>
- Salleh, R. M., Yusoff, M. A., & Zainal, N. (2022). Professional identity and workplace adjustment among Malaysian graduates. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(3), 197–209. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12432>
- TalentCorp Malaysia. (2023). Graduate employability strategic plan 2023–2027. Kuala Lumpur: TalentCorp.

- Visser, C., & Terblanche, N. (2025). The soft-skills characteristics of Generation Z employees: A scoping review and research agenda. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, a2975. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2975>
- World Economic Forum. (2023). The future of jobs report 2023. Geneva: World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/future-of-jobs-2023>
- Yusof, N., & Daud, N. (2022). The moderating role of emotional intelligence on the relationship between soft skills, personality traits, and employability among technical university students. *International Journal of Technical and Vocational Education*, 14(1), 55–70.
- Yusoff, M. A., Noor, N. M., & Jalil, N. A. (2024). The effectiveness of career literacy interventions on employment confidence and transition readiness among Malaysian university students. *Malaysian Journal of Higher Education*, 14(1), 78–95.
- Yusoff, M. A., Othman, R., & Ibrahim, F. (2024). Enhancing career literacy among Malaysian undergraduates: A mixed-methods study. *Malaysian Journal of Higher Education*, 13(1), 45–62.