



Undergraduates Marketability of Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia: A Case Study

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to determine the employment status of undergraduate students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) from 2015 to 2020. In this study, employment status is defined by (1) job classification and (2) starting salary. This is a case study that focuses on the raw data analysis from the Graduate Tracer Study (Sistem Kajian Pengesanan Graduan, SKPC). The Ministry of Higher Education conducts an annual survey to determine employment status after graduation using an online questionnaire. Only those with a Bachelor's degree from UTHM were selected as respondents in this study. The SKPG database data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. The findings show that, about 66.6% of graduates, are employed in jobs related to their field of study. Furthermore, in approximately 57% of graduates are employed with starting salaries that are match with their qualifications. It is recommended that the programme be revised to address the issue of starting salary, as well as underemployment.

Keywords: Human resources, marketability, undergraduates

1. Introduction

The advancement of industries to be able to compete internationally and the development of human resources for industries are prioritised in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), Tenth Malaysia Plan (2010-2015), and Third Industrial Master Plan, so the government of Malaysia has concentrated on developing human resources for industries (2006-2020). To satisfy the demand of the industry, it is becoming more and more important to have highly talented people resources. Both the quantity and quality of the workforce have altered as the need for human resources grows. Development of human capital is essential for driving and maintaining Malaysia's economic progress. For all sectors of the economy to shift to knowledge-intensive industries, to increase labour productivity, and to draw foreign investment to Malaysia, it is crucial to have access to a highly qualified workforce. The mainstreaming of TVET, the promotion of lifelong learning, and the enhancement of the educational delivery system are some of Malaysia's key human capital development accomplishments. These successes have cemented Malaysia's status as one of the most competitive nations in the region and helped the economy thrive.

The Higher Education Master Plan 2015-2025 strengthens the role that higher education plays in generating knowledgeable and skilled graduates in the twenty-first century. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019), there were 516,600 unemployed persons in the nation overall during the first three months of the year. The Peninsular Department of Manpower reported a total of 238,286 unemployed people with JobsMalaysia as active job seekers at the same time, including 174,327 graduates (JTK). According to the official report from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020), there were 170.3 thousand unemployed graduates in 2019 and the graduate unemployment

rate stayed at 3.9%. 74.8 % of recent graduates are actively looking for work (127.4 thousand people). More than 80% had experienced temporary unemployment. One of the topics highlighted is the unemployment rate among recent graduates. The supply and demand of labour are not balanced in the labour market. This problem is frequently linked to the lack of suitable work opportunities on the market, the importance of higher education institutions, the calibre of their programmes, and both. Though there are openings in the employment market, the contentious problem is the calibre of the graduates. To achieve organisational objectives, businesses need highly effective people resources (Sonntag & Frese, 2005). In order to compete in a highly competitive job market, graduates should equip themselves with a variety of supplementary abilities. They should also be aware that getting good grades no longer guarantees them a job matching their qualifications.

There has been a positive rise in educational progress. Higher education institutions have expanded rapidly and have been instrumental in raising the number of graduates entering the labour force. Nevertheless, there is more rivalry for jobs now due to the rise of graduates. Numerous challenges, including the mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market, have been brought on by unemployment and the difficulty of finding work. Graduates with decent or excellent grades no longer guarantee employment. Graduates need to be equipped with both technical and practical knowledge and abilities in addition to practical ones. However, McGuinness's 2003 study on the graduate labour market in the UK demonstrates that the choice of study subject and the kind of degree attained—rather than the university attended—determine graduates' marketability in the nation. It can, however, give the appearance that higher education in a nation is less successful at producing a workforce that meets market needs if the rise in the number of graduates is not supported by employment prospects consistent with degrees and disciplines of study. The country has long-standing problems with earnings and the marketability of recent graduates. Therefore, this study aims to identify UTHM graduates who find work in their field of study, and UTHM graduates who make starting salary to qualify for a Bachelor's degree from year 2015 to 2020.

2. Methodology

This is a case study using documentation analysis method. This study focuses on the raw data analysis obtained from the Graduate Tracer Study (Sistem Kajian Pengesan Graduan, SKPC) from year 2015 to 2020. SKPC is the annual survey conducted by Ministry of Higher Education to determine employment status after graduation through an online questionnaire. The survey was conducted using online questionnaire through Likert scale of 5, namely: strongly agreed, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire form has several sections, including respondent information like name, campus, program, year of graduation, year of starting employment after graduation, telephone number, home address, and employer as well as email. In this case study, only those with a Bachelor's degree from UTHM were selected as respondents. The obtained SKPG database data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. Total sample involved in this study was 5794 graduates and 43 undergraduate programmes. The workflow of this study is as follow:

- a) Request the permission to access SKPC data from authority body at UTHM
- b) Identify the related data from SKPC
- c) Select data of Bachelor's degree from UTHM only
- d) Choose the data only on work in their field of study and starting salary
- e) Conduct the data analysis and make a conclusion

3. Results and Discussion

To ensure that the supply of skilled labour matches industry demand, a productive and adaptable labour market is necessary. According to the findings of this case study's analysis, of the 2713 graduates from UTHM who find jobs in their field of study, more than 70% are from 21 programmes. The majority of UTHM undergraduate graduates from 2015 to 2020 found work in their field of study, as shown in Table 1. Students' growth is valued for more than just their academic prowess; it also demonstrates that they possess the talents and characteristics that employers value. The current university makes every attempt to encourage students to develop high levels of proficiency. From an academic perspective, the curriculum has been improved through employment market research and collaboration with industry. While programmes that assist career development are essential for ensuring that students can focus on academic success and high skill development. With 140 graduates overall, about three programme graduates often have fewer than 50% of them working in a position linked to their area of study. Table 1 lists the specifics of occupations attained in relation to academic fields for the 43 total programmes and graduates. For each of the Bachelor's degree programmes, Figure 1 shows the percentage of jobs attained in the field of study.

Table 1 - Job obtained related to field of study

Percentage Job obtained related to field of study	Field of study	<i>f</i> (Programme)	<i>f</i> (Number of graduates)
< 50%	Science (Biological Diversity and Conservation), Science (Applied Physics), Science (Mathematics Technology)	3	140
50%-59%	Vocational Education (Building Construction), Computer Science (Multimedia Computing), Electronic Engineering Technology (Communications And Computers), Vocational Education (Catering), Technology in Aeronautical Engineering (Aircraft Maintenance), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Industrial Packaging), Vocational Education (Refrigeration and Air Conditioning)	7	328
60%-69%	Technology in Civil Engineering (Environment), Science (Industrial Statistics), Technology Management, Vocational Education (Electrical And Electronics), Technology Management (Construction), Property Management, Vocational Education (Creative Multimedia), Electrical Engineering, Vocational Education (General Machining), Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Technology in Aeronautical Engineering (Professional Aviation)	12	2613
70%-79%	Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Plant), Vocational Education (Welding and Metal Fabrication), Technology Management (Production And Operations), Computer Science (Web Technology), Science in Architecture, Education (Primary School), Civil Engineering, Technology Management (Furniture Design and Manufacturing), Science (Food Technology), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Automotive), Civil Engineering Technology (Building Services), Technology in Electronic Engineering (Industrial Automation), Technology in Chemical Engineering (Biotechnology), Computer Science (Software Engineering), Computer Science (Information Security), Technology in Civil Engineering (Construction), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Industrial Textiles), Electrical Engineering Technology (Electrical Power), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Manufacturing), Information Technology	20	2636
>80%	Technical and Vocational Education	1	77

However, there are still some graduates who work primarily in professions unrelated to their fields of study. These came from the Science (Biological Diversity and Conservation) (64%), Science (Applied Physics) (59%), and Science (Mathematics Technology) (52%). The establishment of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) and create an integrated quality assurance system has improved educational quality. Higher education institutions in Malaysia are continually working to better enhance their academic programmes in order to promote the employability of graduates. However, Osman, Yussof, and Mohd Nor (2010), who contrasted employee educational attainment with job qualification criteria, did not reach the same conclusions. The findings revealed that "educational inflation," or a potential mismatch between occupational needs and excessive qualifications, may exist. The outcomes of this study, however, are consistent with those of a study by Brunello and Cappellari (2008), who also came to the conclusion that a university's standing and quality determine graduates' marketability. One of Malaysia's schools of higher learning, UTHM, has demonstrated that its many student development initiatives have resulted in outstanding academic performance, skills, and other traits needed by business

and the labour market. In order to increase the number of graduates entering the market, UTHM has been extremely important.

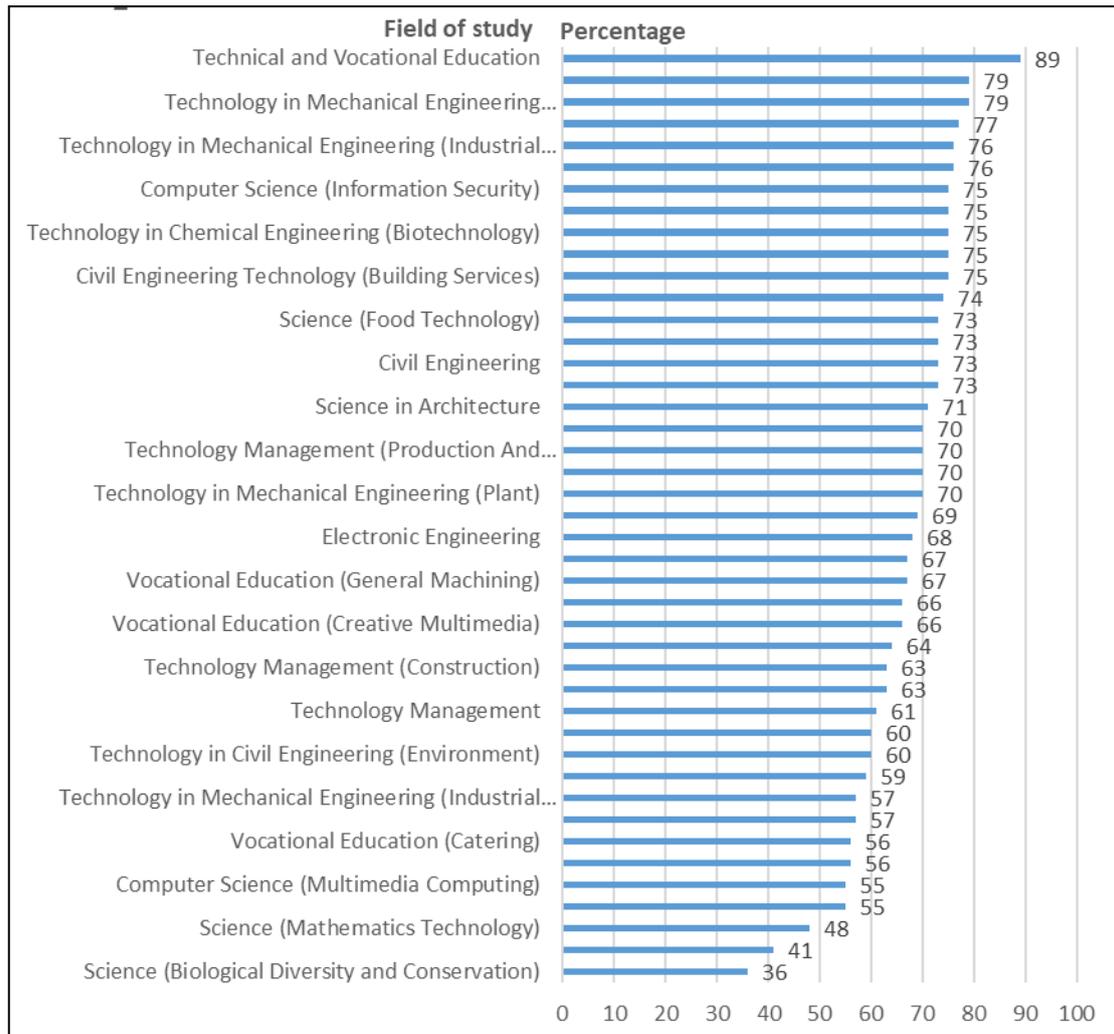


Fig. 1 - Job obtained related to field of study

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Table 2 - Starting salary match to qualification

Percentage starting salary match to qualification	Field of study	<i>f</i> (Programme)	<i>f</i> (Number of graduates)
< 50	Vocational Education (Catering), Technology Management (Furniture Design and Manufacturing), Vocational Education (Creative Multimedia), Science (Biological Diversity and Conservation), Property Management, Vocational Education (Electrical And Electronics), Technology Management, Science (Applied Physics), Science (Mathematics Technology), Computer Science (Multimedia Computing),	14	1280

	Technology Management (Production And Operations), Technology Management (Construction), Vocational Education (Building Construction), Technology in Civil Engineering (Environment)		
50-59	Technology in Aeronautical Engineering (Aircraft Maintenance), Science (Industrial Statistics), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Industrial Textiles), Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering	6	2366
60-69	Civil Engineering Technology (Building Services), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Industrial Packaging), Electronic Engineering Technology (Communications And Computers), Electronic Engineering, Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Manufacturing), Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Plant), Vocational Education (Refrigeration and Air Conditioning), Technology in Aeronautical Engineering (Professional Aviation), Vocational Education (Welding and Metal Fabrication), Vocational Education (General Machining), Electrical Engineering Technology (Electrical Power), Technology in Chemical Engineering (Biotechnology), Technology in Civil Engineering (Construction), Science (Food Technology), Computer Science (Information Security)	15	1529
70-79	Computer Science (Software Engineering), Computer Science (Web Technology), Technology in Electronic Engineering (Industrial Automation), Science in Architecture, Information Technology, Technology in Mechanical Engineering (Automotive)	6	865
>80	Education (Primary School), Technical and Vocational Education	2	1003

UTHM graduates in the fields of Vocational Education (Catering), Technology Management (Furniture Design and Manufacturing), Vocational Education (Creative Multimedia), Science (Biological Diversity and Conservation), Property Management, Vocational Education (Electrical And Electronics), Technology Management, Science (Applied Physics), Science (Mathematics Technology), Computer Science (Multimedia Computing), Technology Management (Production And Operations), Technology Management (Construction), Vocational Education (Building Construction), Technology in Civil Engineering (Environment) earn starting salaries that are lower than those of other bachelor's degree holders. The results are consistent with the work of Cho and Lee (2014), who discovered that although workers initially do not receive pay commensurate with their credentials, they tend to have quicker salary rise than those who do. Young grads, meanwhile, will continue to worry about the realities that these graduates face. Every year, the expense of education rises, but graduates still have a difficult time finding employment, and even their starting pay does not reflect their qualifications. Young people will lose interest in pursuing higher education if this condition persists. They naturally do not want to pursue further education because, in addition to the expensive price of school, it is also difficult for them to obtain employment.

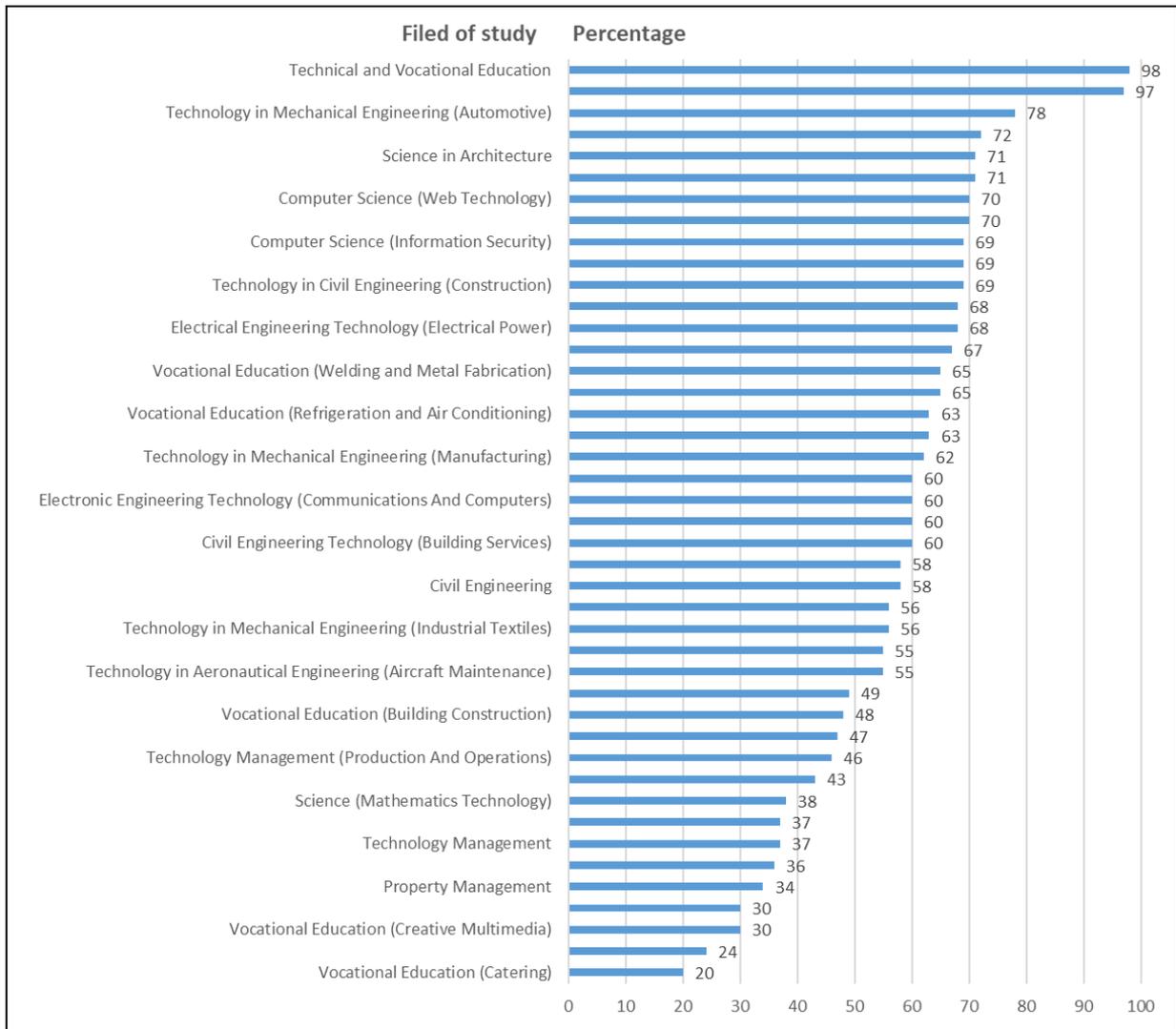


Fig. 2 - Starting salary according to field of study

4. Conclusion

The ability to obtain a degree is very important in deciding work options. The aspirations for job increase with increased levels of education. One of the most important aspects that will determine a person's success and the strength of a nation is education. Discussions of graduate unemployment highlight how the nation's higher education system has failed to produce graduates who can fulfil the demands of business. Higher education institutions have made a lot of changes to increase the quantity and quality of graduates who are employable. The majority of UTHM undergraduates between 2015 and 2020 secured jobs in their field of study, according to the report. According to this study, from 2015 to 2020, the majority of UTHM undergraduates obtained employment in their field of study. As a result, graduates use equivalent qualifications to obtain jobs and apply what they learned at university while working. Employers today look for more than just technical skills in today's workforce. They are also looking for people who can handle a variety of tasks and roles.

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