

## RMTB

Homepage: http://publisher.uthm.edu.my/periodicals/index.php/rmtb e-ISSN: 2773-5044

# The Relationship between Employability Skills and Job Performance among University Graduates

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.30880/rmtb.2022.03.01.004 Received 31 March 2022; Accepted 30 April 2021; Available online 25 June 2022

Abstract: Employability skills refer to knowledge, skill, and attitude that function and enable that required at the workplace. The skills are important to ensure that graduates able to meet the demands set by the employer. However, there are still lacking of skills among graduates have been reported. In addition, the attitudes of graduates those are too choosy in selecting their job. The main research objective is to identify the level of employability skills, to examine the level of job performance and to investigate the relationship between employability skills and job performance among graduates. The method for this study is quantitative approach. The target population of this study were those graduates from eight faculties in public university in Malaysia. The questionnaire was distributed to 335 respondents. The findings shows that university graduates perceived to high level of employability skills and job performance. Findings also reveal that there is a positive relationship between employability skills and job performance, which most graduates used to develop in their self. This research would give benefits to the graduates to develop their skills in the future.

**Keywords**: Employability Skills, Job Performance, Graduates

## 1. Introduction

Job performance is an important criterion for organization. Therefore, the organization should evaluate the employee's performance (Rahil, 2017). Performance of employees is very important for any organization because it eventually leads to organization's success (Bashir *et al.*, 2020). In that case, employers need to recruit and select competent employees for organization (Makhbul *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, it is important for new graduates to make early preparations in various aspects skills. This is due in the highly competition is very high and many competent of candidates they are qualified for the job. One of the reason why the graduates unable to secure work placement because they do not have the employability skills.

The key point for employees to survive in their organization is with the proven of the value of employability skills that can be shown (Overtoom, 2000). In this century, employability skills can be refer as a transferable core skill groups that represents the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that function and enable that required at the workplace. This is important in their career success at all levels of employment. Therefore, graduates who have the employability skills will be able to adapt to all types of work and multi-purpose (Sarfraz *et al.*, 2018). With the skills that the graduates have will help to complete the task smoothly and perfect. This will enhance the skills of employees in the organization in completing various tasks which are given easily. As a result, job performances also can be improved by graduates. Therefore there are required to be able to master themselves with the employability skills. With the employability skills it is expected that their job performance can be increase such as during their working time.

Higher education becomes the placement for all graduates who are ready to get a work. So that, it is becomes a naturally opinion in the society about graduates who are study at higher education will get a better job (Lowden, 2009). However, excellent grades at university do not guarantee graduates to the employability (Ilhaamie *et al.*, 2018). In that case, universities should make sure that their students will take more chances to learn and develop any skills and abilities during their undergraduate study (Crebert *et al.*, 2004). This is to help them to be more confident in going through the process to the realm of work and important as self-preparation for the unknown future. Nowadays, with the ever-changing technological advances and fierce competition in the world of work, this needs attention universities to producing highly skilled and capable graduates to meet the current challenges and needs improving in their employability skills (Goswami & Pollak, 2020). This is important to ensure that graduates who are produced able to meet the demands set by the employer.

Therefore, the qualifications, knowledge, skills and personal attributes play an important role in individuals' employability (Pheko & Molefhe, 2017). When a person has the skills, it is able to carry out various tasks that are given easily. Indirectly, it will improve their job performance in the organization. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the link between employability skills and job performance among graduates. There are three elements that categorized of employability skills such as fundamental, personal management and teamwork skills. Next, to achieve the objective in this research, graduates play an important role in determining the skills that will help their credibility to do a better job and achieve their satisfactory level of performance. Besides that, it is important for them to anticipate in improve the skills and ready for the future skills needed by the labor. Furthermore, they should achieve efficient on the use of employability skills.

There are two major issues that motivate this study to be conducted. First issue is skills deficiency among graduates (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014). One of the reasons is due to the feeling of embarrassment or fear to ask questions that often occur among graduates while they study at university. A feeling of deep depression themselves when they fear being humiliated, ignored and considered stupid when asked. Indirectly, they will become passive and less confident in the lecture room. As a result, the graduates have lack of soft skills including creativity; communication and critical thinking are among the reasons why graduates are unemployed. However, people who are efficient to contribute their own skills can straight away to the organization. Besides that, employers demand that employees obtain several of employability skills and apply competently such skills for preferable job performance (Abas & Imam, 2016). Therefore, it is important to graduates to develop skills in securing work placement.

Second issues is regarding graduate's attitudes that are too choosing in selecting their job. According to Utusan Borneo Online (2017), there is statement about graduates were offered jobs as laborers with a salary of RM3,000 but they turned it down because they wanted a big salary and sat in a comfortable office with air conditioning. This indicates that graduates are highly selective in the job and assume that the qualifications as university graduates for the job are not equivalent. However, there are graduates have been forced their self to pursue non-field employment, even they being paid salaries not commensurate with their qualification. Indirectly, the performance in their task given will be moderate and not very well. Not everyone would give all out to perform well if not their task-field. One of the reason why they accept any job because the high cost of living with the burden of expensive stuff makes everyone not have opportunity to choose a job (Julizah, 2014).

Therefore, to achieve the research objectives the levels of employability skills among university graduates and the levels of job performance among university graduates are measured. Consequently, the relationship between employability skills and job performance among university graduates is identified.

This section should include scope of study. It is focusing on the relationship between of employability skills and job performance among graduates. The sample of this study was limited to graduates' University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). The target population was 2713 student graduates at 2018 from various academic programs offered by eight faculties. The data collection will be conducted by graduates UTHM. The main source data will be the survey, which is the secondary method that adopted questionnaire from past studies by Ranasinghe (2019) and used from Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada (Employability Skills 2000 +, 2000). The questionnaire will measure the employability skills and job performance among graduates. There are four sections in this questionnaire which is section A, section B and section C. The method used to measure questionnaire on the Section B and C was Likert Scale on 5 point from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The research would be beneficial to the graduate because they can improve their job performance by knowing the employability skills. In this study, many graduates would be through the process how to get performance well in their job. In addition, it will be a good opportunity for them to know many skills and also can learn and adapt. Besides that, they can identify the most appropriate strategies that can improve their performance and skills when they engage become a worker in the future. Moreover, this study helps graduates to identify their strength and weaknesses by conducting this research.

Next, the future employers also get beneficial because there are able on selected their new workers with professional. Employers often seek more qualified skills and experience (Rehman, 2014). Employers are often willing to teach someone in the job-specific skills required, such as how to use a machine or specific computer which is very special part of job at company. However, they usually curious if they are already have other soft skills before being hired, as they are more difficult to teach. Based on pre-set criteria of their organization, it should be success and give an employers' satisfaction. Therefore, the job performance of their employees will be always increasing and effectively to achieve the organization goals.

This research also would be beneficial for other researchers as they will be able to obtain some information that may be needed in their research and some of their questions may be able to be answered by this research. It can help develop new findings in their research to get better results. Besides that, it can cultivate them for critical thinking and analytical skills through direct learning. They are also able to develop knowledge and understanding of selected areas outside of the classroom.

## 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introductions

The literature review will be described for a number of research-related keywords and terms including a discussion of similar and past studies. In this review, the data has been collected from an existing literature and research, consisting from the published and unpublished materials such as articles, journals, books, web articles and research reports.

#### 2.2 Job Performance

(a) Definition of Job Performance

Job performance can be identified as all behaviors performed by employees while working (Fogaça *et al.*, 2018). Individual job performance is a measure of research results that are relevant in the work environment. It is refers to a person's performance in their work. There are aspects that including such as job-specific task competence, behaviors of core work tasks, level of commitment to core tasks, and general work behaviors become important factors related to job performance.

## (b) Theory of Job Performance

Job performance consists of two main factors which is task performance with the core job responsibilities of an employee and contextual performance goes beyond formal employment responsibilities (Motowidlo *et al.*, 1997). It is useful to identifying and defining underlying dimensions of the behavioral parts which that make up the performance domain. The term of task performance refers to the core technical behaviors and activities involved in the job and for contextual performance was for behaviors that support the environment in which the technical core operates (Griffin *et al.*, 2000). In this study, the context of job performance is including by the term of task performance which is related to producing job-specific goods and services, requires employees to acquire and demonstrate core technical skills. Meanwhile, contextual performance improving on climate of the organization by means of reinforcement social networks. Employees engaged in this contextual performance contribute to the culture and climate of the organization.

#### (c) Past Study of Job performance

According to Abas and Imam (2016), job performance dimensions should be generalized across various jobs. Differentiation can be made between elements task and contextual performance. Because of that, it is inevitable for heads of government to expand their work performance criteria, because not only on the understanding of performance in its traditional concept of a particular task behavior, they need to also focus also on its contextual performance.

## 2.3 Employability Skills

# (a) Definition of Employability Skills

Employability skills can be known as the fundamental skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills which employers expect from their workers and which they expect to be developed by the education system by Conference Board of Canada (2000). Besides that, the concept of employability doing an important role in driving the economy of a country around the world (Rahman *et al.*, 2017). According to Overtoom (2000), in this 21st century workplace, employability skills can be refer as a transferable core skill groups that represents the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that function and enable that required at the workplace.

## (b) Theory of Employability Skills

The term of employability skills referred on the Employability Skills 2000+ conceptualized by the Conference Board of Canada (2000). In addition, the term has three main categories of employability skills to which the different skill areas belong such as Fundamental, Personal Management and Teamwork Skills. However, it is different perspective from the point of view of theory of human capital through the perspective of social psychology that employability is a job but more towards the ability to do work (Rasul *et al.*, 2010).

#### (c) Past Study of Employability Skills

Employability skills are important for every person who is called an employee. Therefore, all graduates who want to continue into the world of work must apply skills that can help the organization. The importance in the success of an organization lies in the efforts and skills exhibited by the individual himself. This can be proven from past study by Rasul *et al.* (2010), they showed that mastering employability skills is one of the global problems employers face with their graduates or prospective employees. Various studies on employability skills have been conducted nationally and internationally and it has been found that many technical graduates currently lack job skills rather than technical skills. In addition, Sarfraz *et al.* (2018) have been conducted their research to identify any similarities and

differences in reported employability skills that are in demand in different sectors of industry or parts of the world. The results indicate a set of employability skills that are typically reported worldwide as important by all studies included in the survey.

2.4 The Relationship between Employability Skills and Job Performance.

#### (a) Past Study of The Relationship between employability Skills and Job Performance

A study by Abas and Imam (2016) aims to examine between skills competency of graduates and contextual performance that using The Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills 2000+ and elements of contextual performance adopted from Borman and Motowidlo's Taxonomy. In this research, they explained that even in the personal management skills have a moderate relationship with employee contextual behavior, competence in personal adaptation and continuous study is contributors across all elements of contextual performance. Another study by Rahmat and Buntat (2016), they are explored about the factor in the constructs and dimensions of employability skills that can predict the work performance of Malaysian electrical and electronics polytechnic graduates in the electrical and electronics industry. They are used Employability Skills Work Performance Prediction to constructs and dimensions in their research.

Study from Imam and Abas (2016), they aim to determine whether employability skills of employees correlate with task performance. The finding research found that the skill acquisition and skill competence had a significant positive relationship with task performance. The acquisition and competency of employer-assessed employability skills requires continuous improvement to succeed in job performance. Meanwhile, study by Abas (2016), they explored to explain the extent of application of employability skills and contextual performance. The results indicate that employees have satisfactory contextual performance. Therefore, they need to application of employability skills and contextual behavior should be enhanced to meet the growing and complex challenges of the respective government agencies.

Next, past study from Imam and Abas (2018), the researchers study the application of employability skills in the current and future workplace can facilitate workers but in context on job performance. This study also findings the inferential analysis indicates that employability skills had significant moderate positive relationship towards contextual performance. Therefore, they need to be retained to pave the way for the improvement of additional role behaviors that help find out the needs and demands of public institutions. In the past study by Aryani and Widodo (2020), they are focus on direct effects of employability and job characteristics on contextual performance of vocational high school principals mediating by organizational commitment. The results have been confirmed that employability, job characteristics, and organizational commitment had significant direct effects on contextual performance and organizational commitment. Meanwhile, another result was indirect effects on contextual performance mediating by organizational commitment.

#### 3. Research Methodology

This research methodology would be present about the methodology that used to collecting data for this study. It will be explain the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection techniques, survey instrument, data analysis. It is also gives the specific about the population with the sampling techniques used for the research.

## 3.1 Research Design

Research design known as the initial planning of the methods that will be adopted to collect the relevant data and the techniques that will be used in the analysis (Akhtar, 2016). These researches also aim to be arrangement the conditions for data collection and analysis that can be combining with the relevance to research objectives with economics and procedures. Besides that, in this study the research design could be set when the topics and problems of the study have been selected and formulated, the objectives have been prepared the outlined, the concepts have been properly defined and also the

hypotheses have been properly formulated. This research has been chosen a quantitative approach where is the survey will be conducted. When the quantitative methods can involve questionnaires or telephone surveys, experiments and structured observations it will be more practical and concrete. This method of data collection is called when the goals and questions of the study are descriptive. Next, researcher will be used statistics to analyze the data and will be present the results in the form of statistical jargon, numbers and graphs (Aramay, 2014).

#### (a) Sampling Method

The researcher has been collecting the information about the population graduate UTHM from the staff UTHM Career Development Center and Alumni. The population of them was 2713 graduates in 2018. For the sampling schedule by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), this study has been set a total 338 respondents to answer the questionnaires. The type of sampling method in this study is Simple Random Sampling. The type of simple random sampling is the probability sampling that researcher would be randomly selects a subset of participants from a population. Every member of the population has the same an opportunity to be selected. Data were then collected from the largest possible percentage of this random subset. The data collection will be conducted by graduates UTHM that have already working.

## (b) Research Instrument

Research instrument are the tools that will be used to collect data from respondents to answer. It is also to achieve the research question and objectives that have been stated above. This research used quantitative method with the questionnaire as a tool to collect data. There are four sections in that questionnaire which are Section A, Section B and Section C. In the Section A, question would relate the demographic for respondents while Section B will provide the question on level of competency among graduates. Next, in the Section C will ask about the level of job performance. To measure this study, 5 point Likert Scale will be used from the lowest number 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree. This study will be adopted the question from past study that conducted by Ranasinghe (2019) and using from Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada (Employability Skills 2000 +, 2000).

#### 3.2 Data Collection

Data collection is referring as the procedure of collecting, measuring and also to analyzing accurate insights for research using the standard of validated techniques. This research has been used for both of primary and secondary data source. All data will be collected and used to get the result hypothesis and research questions.

#### (a) Primary Data

For primary data collection methods only focused on quantitative method. The quantitative data collection methods were related with the mathematical calculations in various formats. For these methods of quantitative data collection and analysis there are include with questionnaires which is closed-ended questions, correlation and regression methods, mean, mode and median and others. Furthermore, because there are to the high level of standardization of quantitative methods, it can be easier to trying comparisons of findings.

## (b) Secondary Data

Next, the type of secondary data is data that has already been published in newspapers, books, journals, magazines, online portals and others. In that case, researcher can collect any information related which can help to explanation for this study. Therefore, the determination of an accurate the set of criteria that be used in secondary data will be plays an important role to improving the level of reliability and validity of the research.

## 3.3 Data Analysis

Data Analysis is one of the methods of put facts and figures to solving the problems on the research. There are important for research questions to get answers. Next significant in this research is the interpretation of data taken from analytical data and making inferences. Next, data will be collected from primary data sources, namely questionnaires that will be analyzed using descriptive data analysis methods and correlation methods.

#### (a) Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis also known as descriptive analytics is a step that uses statistical techniques to explain or do summarize a set of data. This type of data analysis is famous because it can be used to generate accessible observations from not interpreted data. Moreover, it is also not a trying to make predictions about the future but rather to obtain mere observations from past data, by manipulating in a way that makes it more useful. In turn, descriptive analysis can help refine out less meaningful data. The reason is because the statistical techniques used in this type of analysis which is always focus on patterns in the data, rather than on outlines.

#### (b) Correlation Analysis

Correlation was used to test on the relationship between categorical or quantitative variables. Moreover, there are measures of how things relate. The variables correlate is called with correlation analysis. Furthermore, this correlation is useful because if it can know the relational variables, it can also assuming predictions about future behaviour. Thus, there is a correlation coefficient which is the way to place a value on the relationship. The correlation coefficient has a value between -1 and 1. Meanings there is negative or positive correlation that refers to the type of graph that will be produced by the relationship. If the value is "0" it refers there is no direct relationship for the variables. The most common correlation coefficient that always be used is the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The function is to test linear relationships between data.

## 4. Results

#### 4.1 Demographic Analysis

The demographic factors are used to analyze the data. Demographic information consists of gender, age, ethnicity, faculty, working experience and their income level. Respondent demographics were analyzed and discussed using frequency and percentage. Table 1 shows that the majority number of respondents is men with a percentage rate of 58.5%. Most of the respondents are from the age group of 24-26 years with a total percentage of 43.7%. The majority of percentage rate for ethnicity shows that the Malay is the highest with a percentage rate of 82.2%. While for the graduate Fptp is the most respondent with 23.3%. Mostly, their working experience is about 3-5 years with the 50.0%. The income level shows that the salary rate in the range of RM1001 -RM3000 received the highest percentage of respondents which is 51.5%.

**Table 1: Respondents' Demographic** 

	Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	158	58.5

	Female	112	41.5
	21-23	22	8.1
A 22 (2220mg)	24-26	118	43.7
Age (years)	27-30	109	40.4
	30 and above	21	7.8
	Malay	222	82.2
Ethnicity	Chinese	20	7.4
Ethnicity	Indian	21	7.8
	Others	7	2.6
	FPTP	63	23.3
	FKEE	34	12.6
Graduate from the	FPTV	16	5.9
faculty	FSKTM	31	11.5
	FKMP	58	21.5
	FAST	15	5.6
	Less than 1	27	10.0
Working Experience	1-2	90	33.3
(years)	3-5	135	50.0
	More than 5	18	6.7
	RM1000 and below	16	5.9
Incomo I ovol	RM1001-RM3000	139	51.5
Income Level	RM3001-RM5000	92	34.1
	RM5001 and above	23	8.5

## 4.2 Descriptive Analysis for Employability Skills

Table 2 shows the results of descriptive analysis for employability skills and job performance. In overall, graduates perceived themselves with high level of fundamental skills, personal management skills and teamwork skills, which mean more than 4.00. Further, graduates also agreed that their level of job performance is high (u=4.19, s=0.5667).

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of employability skills and job performance

Variable	Mean (µ)	Standard Deviation (σ)	Level
Employability Skills			
Fundamental	4.21	0.657	High
Personal Management	4.14	0.6935	High
Teamwork	4.11	0.7421	High
Job Performance			
Job Performance	4.19	0.5668	High

## 4.3 Correlation Analysis between Employability Skills and Job Performance

Before performing correlation analysis, normality test were required to be conducted. Based on Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality, both variables, employability skills and job performance was normal as p-value>0.05. Table 3 reveals that there is a significant relationship between all employability skills and job performance. The results indicated that the higher employability skills, the higher job performance of the graduates.

Table 3: Correlation between employability skills and job performance

		Fundamental	Personal Management	Teamwork
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Job Performance	Correlation Coefficient	0.640**	0.589**	0.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	270	270	270

<sup>\*\*</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 5. Conclusion

It can be concluded from this study is that employability skills are very important to find out the job performance of an employee. This is for creating competitive workers, productive and creative. Besides that, each item found in the independent variables and dependent variables of the element has its strength distinctive. This study shows that the distributed questionnaires are easy to understand by respondent. In addition, studies conducted for the future need to further expand the scope of studies of graduates such as respondents from diploma graduates, masters and other levels of study available at UTHM.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would also like to thank the Technology Management Focus Group and Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia for its support.

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