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Exploring Internship Readiness among Final Year Students in University: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This article describes statistical study of internship readiness among final year student in UUMCAS. The objective of this study is to explore factors that influence student's readiness to enter internship program. Primary data were collected by distributing direct questionnaire to a hundred and ninety four final semester students in UUM CAS, UUM Malaysia. A factor analysis yielded three factors, which are university experiences, employment preparation and internship presumption.

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INTRODUCTION

Students are products of universities (Alfan and Othman, 2005). After they graduated, they are the source of manpower to develop country's economy. As Malaysia is currently striving to achieve a status of a developed country and a high income nation by the year 2020, certain measures should also be in place to ensure the youngsters are ready and aware of this national agenda, despite the volatile and challenging economy in global landscape. These fresh graduates will need to ensure the continuity of the resilient in economic growth in the country. However, there are tendency for the students to adopt low self-esteem and lack of confidence to embark in industry (Wu and Wu, 2006). As highlighted by Safie and Nayan (2010) and Bennet (2006), common attributes deemed essential in a workplaces include responsibility, self - confidence, self-control, social attitude, well-groomed, cooperative, self-motivated and self-management, as well as good transferable skills. However, conflict may arise as most graduates are not aware of these demands. Thus, to investigate how they function will significantly ensure of the attributes to achieve thus the foundation of our resilient domestic economic will sustain. Ko (2007) indicates that higher satisfaction in practicum training will results in higher satisfaction and confidence level about student's future career.

Understand the importance of this issues, the government has initiates framework for local public and private universities to report on their alumni. The aim is to ensure graduates secured good jobs within six months after they leave university, with expected percentage of 75% to be employed according to their field of study. However, Wye *et al.* (2012) in their finding illustrates a number of 11,527 job vacancies are reported by employers to the Ministry of Human Resources (MoHR) as at May 18, 2010, were only filled up by 3,457 graduate job seekers, when there are 32,331 new registered graduates recorded at the Jobs Malaysia. One contributing factor of this event is the job un-readiness upon graduation (Wye *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, National Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 introduced by the government as part of the Government Transformation Plan proved the commitment to nourish the graduates in the recent years. This blueprint focuses on developing graduates that are competitive in international standards needed to help the country rise to globalization. a skilled domestic talents will bring multinational organization to invest in Malaysia. As a result, the national agenda to be a developed nation by the year 2020 can be fulfilled.

To ensure the sustainability and competency of the skilled talents in the job markets, the readiness among graduates to embark in the labor force is a must (Wye, Lim and Lee, 2012). However, only few research have been focusing on this issues, with the exception in Brown & Glasner (1999), Messick (1999), Riggio, Mayes & Schleicher (2003) and Wye *et al.* (2012). Thus, more research on this area is necessary to ensure in depth understanding of this future domestic talents.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted to explore internship readiness among final year students in UUM College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), Universiti Utara Malaysia students. A number of one hundred ninety four final semester students were selected. The sample comprises of students from School of Computing, School of Quantitative Sciences, School of Education and Modern Language, School of Social Development and School of Multimedia Technology and Communication. Students were randomly selected using the stratified sampling method. The questionnaire consists of 22 items. These items were measured using a semantic scale with the following anchors: 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

Results:

Internal Consistency of Reliability:

By using SPSS, we estimated internal consistency of the scores (Cronbach alpha coefficient). A number of 22 items had an alpha of 0.872, indicating a high degree of internal consistency for group analyses. Items in the questionnaire underwent the reliability analysis in accordance with the extracted three factors. The reliability coefficient shows the consistency of the questionnaire. The widely used Cronbach's alpha calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha yielded acceptable ranges of reliability coefficients. The scale on internship presumption had a very high alpha of 0.796. The scale on employment preparation had a second highest alpha (0.764). The scale on university experiences had the alpha of 0.672. Taking all these factors altogether, this instrument is highly reliable in students' readiness for internship environment. Results of the internal consistency of reliability for three factors are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of Cronbach's Alpha Estimates.

Factors	Number of statements	Alpha value
University experiences	8	0.672
Employment preparation	7	0.764
Internship presumption	7	0.796

Factor Analysis:

Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to reduce many variables to a few dimensions (Seiler, 2004). Responses were subjected to a factor analysis using the maximum likelihood method of extraction and varimax, orthogonal rotation. Based on Seiler (2004), both Kaiser – Guttman criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and Catell's scree test were considered. From the results in Table 2, three factors were retained, which accounted for 43.265% of the variance. The value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is recorded at 0.892 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity value is also significant. That is, its associated probability is less than 0.05. This means that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

Scree Plot:

The purpose of factor analysis is to reduce the number of variables to a smaller number. In this study, factor analysis is used to derive the new variables which are called factors in order to give better understanding about the data. The graphical scree plot proposed by Cattell (1966) was used to reduce the number of factors from items in the instrument. Cattell's scree test are plotting the eigenvalues and looking to see where the graph tails to shallow scree. From the result in Figure 1, an analysis of the scree plot revealed that three items should be extracted. These items have the point at which the eigenvalues seem to level off.

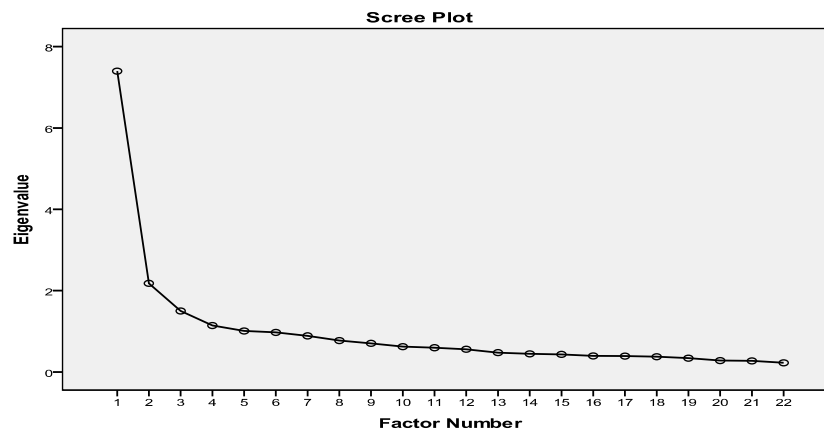


Fig. 1: Scree Plot Diagram Showing The Eigenvalues of The Items.

Varimax with Kaiser Normalization:

Items with loadings of more than 0.5 are considered valid contributors. Table 2 presents the factor loading under three different categories. Factor 1 = University Experiences, Factor 2 = Employment Preparation and Factor 3 = Internship Presumption. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 were loaded under Factor 1. Items 6, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 were loaded under Factor 2. Items 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 22 were loaded under Factor 3.

For Factor 1, item 'I think that I receive moral support from my friends throughout my study in UUM.' loaded highest with factor loading of 0.754. Factor 2 loaded highest on item 'I interact with my lecturers to get the information about career prospect and opportunity to further my study' with factor loading of 0.778 while for Factor 3, the highest loaded item is 'I believe that the knowledge that I acquired in UUM is enough for my practicum' with factor loading of 0.768.

Table 2: Details of Factor Analysis Showing the Loadings of Each Item.

No.	Items	Factors		
		1	2	3
1	I believe that my knowledge has increased after I become UUM student.	.675		
2	I will not compromise on my experiences in UUM with any other experiences.	.246		
3	I think that my lecturer wanted me to succeed in my study.	.665		
4	I think that I receive moral support from my friends throughout my study in UUM.	.754		
5	I think that I receive moral support from my lecturers throughout my study in UUM.	.680		
8	Most of my friends have been involved in illicit activities while studying in UUM.	-.464		
9	UUM educate me to respect other people from different background.	.664		
10	I am proud to be UUM alumni.	.535		
6	I wish to help my junior after finishing my study.		.515	
16	I discussed with my lecturer on the potential industries related to my field of study as part of preparations for my practicum.		.515	
17	I discussed with my friends to find a practicum placement that is appropriate to my study.		.297	
18	I planned to further my study after the completion of my bachelor degree.		.465	
19	I will choose UUM if I want to further my study.		.504	
20	I interact with my lecturers to get the information about career prospect and opportunity to further my study.		.778	
21	I ask UUM alumni about their working experiences.		.530	
7	My expectations before and after I stayed in UUM are in-line.			.328
11	Information about practicum is clearly delivered and easy to understand prior to my practicum.			.457
12	In my opinion, practicum will expose me to real working environment.			.454
13	I am excited to undergo my practicum.			.555
14	I believe that I have enough soft skills for my practicum and my future work.			.768
15	I believe that the knowledge that I acquired in UUM is enough for my practicum.			.703
22	I have a close relationship with UUM alumni.			.415

Discussion and conclusion:

This study was carried out to explore the internship readiness among UUM CAS's final year students. Results suggest that all the items were retained and were categorized under three different categories which are University Experiences, Employment Preparation and Internship Presumption. The first factor (University Experiences) comprised of eight items and seven items were categorized under Factor 2 (Employment Preparation). As in Factor 3 (Internship Presumption), seven items were included.

Generally, these three factors will become as helpful indicator in discussing the important element of internship readiness among students. In the future, it will help university/institution to develop suitable course outlines that may be relevant to student needs in order to prepare them for working environment. The findings in this study will give in depth understanding to the underlying needs for the students and will prepare students with importance the knowledge and skill needed before joining the work force.

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