UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

DETERMINANTS OF CAREER MATURITY
OF FINAL-YEAR UNDERGRADUATES IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN
PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

SEE BOON PING

FPP 2009 22

DETERMINANTS OF CAREER MATURITY OF FINAL-YEAR UNDERGRADUATES IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

By

SEE BOON PING

MASTER OF SCIENCE
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

February 2009

**Dedicated to all my family members
with affection and gratitude**

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia
in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

**DETERMINANTS OF CAREER MATURITY
OF FINAL-YEAR UNDERGRADUATES IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN
PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

By

SEE BOON PING

February 2009

Chair   : Associate Professor Azizan Asmuni, PhD

Faculty   : Educational Studies

The study was conducted to identify the determinants of career maturity among undergraduates in private higher education institution in Malaysia. In this study, the level of career maturity was being identified and its relationships with gender, social-economic status, work experience, work value, Career Decision-making Self-efficacy and self-esteem were being studied.

The targeted samples were 340 final year undergraduates from two selected private higher education institutions. Out of this total, 275 responded and data was collected for analysis and interpretations. In order to identify the relationships and differences of independent variables, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation test, independent sample t-test and ANOVA test have been carried out with level of career maturity. Meanwhile, multiple linear-regression

analysis was done with its independent variables in order to identify the determinants of career maturity in this study.

Overall, it was found that the career maturity was at upper moderate level (M = 3.6393). There were no significant differences on mean career maturity level by gender, SES and work experience (p > .05). It was found that SES, work value, Career Decision-making Self-efficacy and self-esteem were significantly related to career maturity (p < .05). Among these independent variables, CDMSE had scored the highest Pearson's correlation coefficient value (r = .610, p < .0125). It is then followed by self-esteem (r = .374, p < .05), work value (r = .234, p < .05) and SES (r = .158, p < .05). In this study, the significant determinants for career maturity were CDMSE (t = 9.438, p < .05) and self-esteem (t = 2.495, p < .05). On the other hand, the SES (t = 1.448, p > .05) and work value (t = .279, p > .05) were not significant determinants for career maturity in this study. The regression model was not fully supported by the data collected. Only about 38% of the variability in career maturity was explained by the four independent variables.

Based on the findings of this study, further research is needed to identify additional determining variables, and to improve the regression model of career maturity. Suggestions for implement and develop for suitable career development programmes were discussed.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENENTU KEMATANGAN KERJAYA DI KALANGAN MAHASISWA-MAHASISWI TAHUN AKHIR DI INSTITUSI PENDIDIKAN TINGGI SWASTA TERPILIH DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

SEE BOON PING

Februari 2009

Pengerusi : **Profesor Madya Azizan Asmuni, PhD**

Fakulti : **Pengajian Pendidikan**

Kajian ini dikendalikan dengan tujuan mengenalpasti penentu-penentu
kematangan kerjaya di kalangan mahasiswa-mahaswi tahun akhir di institusi
pendidikan tinggi swasta di Malaysia. Dalam kajian ini, tahap kematangan
kerjaya telah dikenalpasti serta perhubungannya dengan pembolehubah jantina,
tahap sosio-ekonomi, pengalaman berkerja, nilai berkerja, *career decision-
making self-efficacy* dan penghargaan kendiri telah dikaji dengan teliti.

Sasaran sampel kajian ini adalah 340 mahasiswa-mahasiswi tahun akhir daripada
dua buah institusi pendidikan tinggi swata yang terpilih. Daripada jumlah ini, 275
telah menjawab kertas soal-selidik. Data dikumpul demi analisis dan interpretasi
kajian. Untuk megenalpasti perhubungan serta perbezaan yang wujud antara
pembolehubah-pembolehubah ini, ujian korelasi *Pearson Product-Moment*,
ujian-t dan ujian *ANOVA* telah dijalankan dengan membandingkan tahap
kematangan kerjaya masing-masing. Seterusnya, analisis *multiple linear-*

regression telah dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti penentu-penentu kematangan kerjaya dalam kajian ini.

Keseluruhannya, tahap kematangan kerjaya dikenalpasti berada pada tahap sederhana tinggi ($\underline{M}$ = 3.6393). Tiada perbezaan yang signifikan pada min tahap kematangan kerjaya berdasarkan jatina, tahap sosio-ekonomi serta pengalaman berkerja ($\underline{p}$ > .05). Hasil kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa wujudnya perhubungan tahap sosio-ekonomi, nilai berkerja, *CDMSE* dan penghargaan kendiri dengan kematangan kerjaya ($\underline{p}$ < .05). Di antara pembolehubah-pembolehubah tidak bersandar ini, *CDMSE* mempunyai nilai *Pearson correlation coefficient* yang tertinggi ($\underline{r}$ = .610, $\underline{p}$ < .0125). Seterusnya diikuti dengan penghargaan kendiri ($\underline{r}$ = .374, $\underline{p}$ < .05), nilai berkerja ($\underline{r}$ = .234, $\underline{p}$ < .05) dan tahap sosio-ekonomi ($\underline{r}$ = .158, $\underline{p}$ < .05). Penentu-penentu yang signifikan kepada kematangan kerjaya ialah *CDMSE* ($\underline{t}$ = 9.438, $\underline{p}$ < .05) dan penghargaan kendiri ($\underline{t}$ = 2.495, $\underline{p}$ < .05). Manakala tahap sosio-ekonomi ($\underline{t}$ = 1.448, $\underline{p}$ > .05) dan nilai berkerja ($\underline{t}$ = .279, $\underline{p}$ > .05) tidak wujud sebagai penentu kematangan kerjaya yang signifikan. Model regresi yang dicadangkan tidak disokong sepenuhnya oleh data yang dikumpul dalam kajian ini. Keseluruhnya dalam kajian ini, *CDMSE*, penghargaan kendiri, tahap sosio-ekonomi serta nilai berkerja hanya menyumbang 38.2% daripada variasi kematangan kerjaya. Kajian lajut diperlukan demi mengenalpasti lebih banyak penentu-penentunya, dan seterusnya memperbaiki model regresi ini. Implementasi program kerjaya yang sesuai serta pembangunan program telah dibincang selepas dapatan kajian.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of this thesis is attributed to those who have been involved in developing and improving the content as well as to those who have encouraged and supported me throughout my study.

I wish to extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Azizan Asmuni who has provided excellent guidance and has given me invaluable comments and ideas to enhance the quality of this study. I must record my appreciations too of the critical comments and guidance of Dr. Foo Say Fooi for improving the contents of the thesis.

My appreciations to Dr. Vikineswaran, for helped me to validate the research instrument. Special thanks to Mr. Yeap, who has encouraged me and contributed his time to proofread and further improves the syntax for the thesis. I would like to thank also all those who have granted permission and have helped in my data collection for this research. Also, thanks to all my colleagues and appreciation for your consistent supports and encouragement.

My heartfelt gratitude to my family members on your support and encouragement throughout my study. For my mom Tan Kim Wah, my elder sister Siew Hoon and elder brother Boon Hock, thanks for your word of encouragements and morale supports. My father-in-law and mother-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law together with their lovely daughter Ester Chen, thanks for sharing your loves and taking care of Ming Yan. Not forgetting my sister-in-law Hwei Shin for

your endless love to Ming Yi. Last but not least, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to my wife Hwei Ming. You have accompanied me along my study and supported me without any doubt on my ability to success. I would not be able to make it without you. Thanks for your love and your trust in me.

Dear all, I like to acknowledge your contributions to my study and to share this success with all of you. Thank you very much.

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 6 February 2009 to conduct the final examination of See Boon Ping on his thesis entitled "Determinants of Career Maturity of Final-Year Undergraduates in Selected Malaysian Private Higher Education Institutions" in accordance with the Universities and University College Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1988. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Rusnani Abdul Kadir, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Jamilah Othman, PhD
Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Norhasni Zainal Abiddin, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Dimbab Ngidang, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Social Sciences
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
(External Examiner)

BUJANG KIM HUAT, PhD
Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 21 May 2009

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Azizan Asmuni, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Foo Say Fooi, PhD
Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

_____
HASANAH MOHD GHAZALI, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 8 June 2009

x

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

_____

SEE BOON PING

Date: 27 April, 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HEI   Higher Education Institutions

CDMSE   Career Decision-making Self-efficacy

SES   Social-economic Status

SCCT   Social Cognitive Career Theory

CDM   Career Decision Making

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The purpose of college and university is to provide opportunities for acquisition of knowledge, social development and personal growth. Many graduates emerge as responsible adults, with broader worldview and are prepared for challenges in their future work places and personal life. Counselors in the college or university have the primary role to assist students in making choices for college majors or initial career fields. However, a student's developmental readiness for career decision-making is paramount in career counseling. This readiness to make career decisions is referred to as career maturity. Career maturity is an important concept in counseling, assessment and intervention strategies with students in subject selection, further educational opportunities as well as in an occupation selection.

Career maturity is central to a developmental approach to understand career behavior and involve an assessment of an individual's level of career progress in relation to his or her career relevant developmental tasks (Brown, 2002). In considering the career development of adolescents, career maturity is a widely used and valuable construct (Punch, Creed & Hyde, 2005). Coertse & Schepers (2004) has expressed that in making a right career choice, an individual should display a certain level of career maturity. Career maturity broadly refers to the individual's readiness to make informed, age-appropriate career decisions and

cope with career development tasks (Savickas, 1984). It is a measure of readiness to make career decisions on the basis of attitudes towards, and knowledge of career decision-making (Powell & Luzzo, 1998).

Nevertheless, what happens to undergraduates in the college or university who are not ready to make decisions or who have no vocational goals upon graduation? They may become quite anxious or despondent due to the uncertainty of how to begin selecting or pursuing a career. Labour Market Report (May 2008) released by the Labour Department, Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia showed that majority of the work force in Malaysia is from the age group of 20 to 24 years old (58.9%) and 25 to 29 years old (21.7%). They contributed to a total of 80.6% of the work force in Malaysia. The college years therefore are a crucial time for career-related decision-making. The undergraduates, who are also in the adolescence stages, are identified as in the transition stage form school-to-work (STW), because it is generally the beginning point of fulltime employment (Savickas, 1999). Undergraduates are the future human resources of the society; hence they are faced with the need to choose an academic major as well as to develop career goals for their future (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999). Consequently it is important for undergraduates to perform careful career exploration and planning during the college or university years.

The route to a successful career could be long and tough. Success in work and satisfaction in work are subjective concepts with different meanings for different

individuals, but few people do not value and seek them (Punch et al., 2005). To date, the statistics released by the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia recorded a total of 42,289 unemployed graduates in Malaysia (Labour Market Report, May 2008). In the 21st century, the high expectation of employers and low job opportunities has created a challenge for young adults in deciding their career choice. This clearly noted by the raising expectation on qualifications, economic fluctuations and the internal-external interferences in choosing a career, finding a job, performing a job, and balancing of career and family has made the career initiation and its advancement more difficult. Thus, a proper and well planned career choice is an important issue in the early stages of career life.

Career information shall be gather event starting from teenage years. Teachers, friends, and relatives are among some of the resources. Questions related to career exploration such as "What is your ambition?" and "Who do you want to be in the future?" are frequently being highlighted, especially during school life. These questions require them to declare their career intention by choosing an appropriate course of study in tertiary level (Rashid, Hussin & Putih, 2005). It is eventually helpful for it gives the young school children a starting point of career development task. According to Giannantonio & Hurley-Hanson (2006), adolescents in the growth stage would learn more about the working world and move to obtain more accurate information about specific occupations. Crites (1978) and Super (1957) (as cited in Coertse & Schepers, 2004) maintained that a career matured person displays certain characteristics such as the ability to perform self-evaluation in order to gain insight; obtain the necessary

3

competencies in order to make an informed decision; integrate self-knowledge of the world of work; and implement all or some of the above-mentioned knowledge when planning a career.

In Malaysia, undergraduates in higher education institutions are adolescents within the age ranging from 19 to 24 years. Based on Super's theory, career exploration and crystallization falls within this range too. Some of the development tasks at this stage are formation of self-concept and they are in the stage of tentative career choice moving to the specifications. They explore according to their understanding of the environment, self and the working world. However, Labour Market Report (May 2008) reported total unemployment rate for age range 15 – 24 year itself is 66.3 %. This is 1/3 of the total unemployed people in Malaysia. This is important and serious situation. According to Super (1963), an individual progresses from a stage to a stage in individual developmental process. If an individual does not accomplish the task in the current career developmental stage, it will affect the following career developmental stages. This could subsequently cause job change, job failure, change of career and unemployment.

In year 2006 to 2007, there was an increase from 654,812 to 748,797 students enrolled in about 500 HEIs in Malaysia (MOHE Statistic Macro Data, 2007). This indicated fast growing rate of HEI's population in the country. Hence, the study in career development process among undergraduate has become more

important and essential so as to understand the factors that are related to the undergraduates' career maturity.

Research on career maturity has been on going over the years and the findings are still uncertain. Studies have investigated various correlates of the career maturity construct since its introduction into the literature in 1955. It has been studied in relation to demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, race, ethnic, cultural differences, and socio-economic status differences (Naidoo, Bowman & Gerstein, 1998). Researches have also drawn both direct and indirect relationships between career maturity and a wide spectrum of career-related variables such as age (Super, 1990), gender (Patton & Creed, 2002; Ohler, Levinson and Damiani, 1998; Luzzo, 1995), family socioeconomic status (Rodermund & Silbereisen, 1998; Naidoo et al., 1998; King, 1989), self-esteem (Patton, Bartrum & Creed, 2004), working experience (Super, 1990 as cited in Brown & Brooks, 1996), career decision making self-efficacy (Punch et al., 2005; Patton, Creed & Watson, 2003), work value (Creed & Patton, 2003; Naidoo et al., 1998), and many more.

Over the decades, most of the researches on career maturity and its relationships have been focused on the age and gender. Research has shown that higher graders tend to display mature personality compared to lower graders. Super mentioned that students in a higher grade tend to score higher in the career maturity (as cited in Brown & Brooks, 1996). This could be influenced by the educational advancements exposure and requirements on career development behaviour and

development decisions that students are required to make at a different levels of their development (Watson & Van, 1986). The higher the grade they progress to, the more crystallized are their career decisions.

Research findings exploring the influence of gender on career maturity show mixed results. Most studies conducted some years ago have found that females have higher scores on career maturity measures than males (Patton & Creed, 2002; Ohler et al., 1998; Hartung, 1997; Luzzo, 1995; Thomason & Winer, 1994; King, 1989; Westbrook, 1984 as cited in Walsh & Osipow). In other studies, research evidences have indicated that males scored higher than females (Achebe, 1982); while some studies (Rojewski, 1994) also have indicated that gender was relatively unimportant. Male and female students would have varied choices in their career options. A study of seventh graders have found that, when asked about their hopes for future careers, males tended to list mechanics, construction, the military and sports-related fields, whereas females tended to list health-related, writing, art, and entertainment-related fields (Usinger, 2005). Among these choices, researchers have found that females have generally showed higher career maturity than male (Punch et al., 2005; Wu, 2000; Naidoo et al., 1998; Rojewski, Wicklein & Schell, 1995; Leong, 1991; Westbrook, Cutts, Madison & Arcia, 1980; Omvig & Thomas, 1977). As a result, it seems clear that female adolescents would normally make their career choice earlier then male adolescents.

Differences in socio-economic status (SES) of a family imply different opportunities for specific occupations, variation in exploration activities, and different parenting styles (Schulenberg, Vondracek & Crouter, 1984). Parent's aspirations for their children's occupational attainment would directly influence the child's career exploration and career attitude. Dhillon & Kaur (2005) express that students' estimates of their parents' expectations for their occupational attainment correlates significantly with career maturity. Individual that from a better SES background reflex generally higher career maturity (Rodermund & Silbereisen, 1998; Naidoo et al., 1998; King, 1989).

Gaining career decision-making and world of work knowledge is a key task of the adolescents' developmental process that has been identified by career development theorists (Super, 1990 as cited in Brown & Brooks, 1996) and occurs typically during adolescence when they try out various work roles in part-time work and mostly in school activities. The extent to which an individual explores the world of work depends on multiple factors including life experiences, salience of various life roles and identity and many other factors which are indices of career maturity. In earlier years, studies by Kohen, Grasso, Myers and Shields (1977) (as cited in Healy, O'Shea, & Crook, 1985), and Sewell and Hauser (1975) found that students who had worked during school time had been more success in job seeking after they left school. In addition, work experience during high school was found positively related to acquiring a job in a shorter time (Healy et al., 1985). Hence, work related experience and previous work experiences were found related to career maturity.