



**PREDICTING CAREER ADAPTABILITY THROUGH INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
AND MODERATING ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG JUNIOR
EMPLOYEES IN MALAYSIA**

By

ILYANA BINTI ANAS

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Philosophy**

August 2022

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chair : Siti Raba'ah Hamzah, PhD
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In this 21st century, job prospects worldwide are impacted by various challenges such as globalisation, and technological advancement. On the other hand, challenges such as unemployment, transition from school to work, skill mismatched, and pandemic, have fundamentally changed economic policies and global trade activities, especially in terms of human capital. Career adaptability is, without doubt, an indispensable asset, helping the individual forge ahead regardless of numerous challenges at the workplace. Therefore, with the support of System Theory Framework of Career Development (STFCD), Life-span and Life-Space Theory, and Career Construction Theory (CCT), this research sought to determine the contribution of individual factors towards career adaptability among junior employees who had been employed for less than two years. This cohort is considered as entry-level employees in organisations. Several dimensions of individual factors focused on this research were self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, and social support. Quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey was employed and the questionnaire was distributed to the sample comprised junior employees (n=423) graduated from four Malaysian public universities. SPSS and SEM AMOS were used to analyse the data. The results suggested that the self-esteem and conscientiousness have significant contribution on career adaptability. Contrary to what has been assumed, spiritual intelligence and social support showed non-significant result. In this cohort, social support has moderating role on self-esteem and career adaptability. Therefore, the research conclude that self-esteem and conscientiousness are the principal factors predicting career adaptability and social support moderate the association between self-esteem and career adaptability. The research provides valuable information to stakeholders especially employers and higher education institution in managing individuals.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**FAKTOR INDIVIDU SEBAGAI PERAMAL KEMAMPUAN KERJA
DAN SOKONGAN SOSIAL SEBAGAI PERANAN MODERASI DIKALANGAN
PEKERJA JUNIOR DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Pada abad ke-21 ini, prospek pekerjaan di seluruh dunia dipengaruhi oleh pelbagai cabaran seperti globalisasi, dan kemajuan teknologi. Cabaran seperti pengangguran, peralihan dari sekolah ke tempat kerja, ketidakcocokan kemahiran, dan pandemik pada dasarnya telah mengubah dasar ekonomi dan aktiviti perdagangan global, terutama aspek modal insan. Kebolehsuaian kerjaya adalah aset yang sangat diperlukan untuk membantu individu untuk maju walaupun menghadapi pelbagai cabaran di tempat kerja. Oleh yang demikian, dengan sokongan teori dari Sistem Teori Kerangka Pembangunan Kerjaya (STFCD), Teori Kehidupan dan Kehidupan-Ruang (Life-Span and Life-Space Theory), dan Teori Pembinaan Kerjaya (CCT), penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menentukan sumbangan faktor individu terhadap kebolehsuaian kerjaya di kalangan pekerja baru yang telah bekerja selama kurang dari dua tahun di sesebuah organisasi. Kohort ni dianggap sebagai pekerja peringkat kemasukan di dalam organisasi. Beberapa dimensi faktor individu yang difokuskan dalam penyelidikan ini iaitu harga diri, sifat hemat, kecerdasan spiritual, dan sokongan sosial. Kajian ini memilih pendekatan kuantitatif menggunakan rekabentuk kajian tinjauan rentas dan soal selidik tadbir sendiri. Populasi kajian ini terdiri daripada pekerja baru bergraduat dari empat universiti awam di Malaysia ($n = 423$). SPSS dan Model Persamaan Struktur AMOS digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa harga diri dan sifat hemat mempunyai sumbangan yang signifikan terhadap kebolehsuaian kerjaya tetapi kecerdasan spiritual dan sokongan sosial tidak menunjukkan hubungan signifikan. Selain itu, peranan moderasi melalui sokongan sosial mempunyai pengaruh terhadap harga diri dan kebolehsuaian kerjaya. Oleh itu, penyelidik merumuskan bahawa harga diri dan sifat hemat adalah faktor penting yang menyumbang kepada kebolehsuaian kerjaya dan sokongan sosial berperanan dalam hubungan antara harga diri dan kebolehsuaian kerjaya. Penyelidikan ini dapat menyumbang informasi kepada majikan dan institusi pengajian tinggi dalam mengurus seseorang individu.

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

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Career Adaptability
CAAS	Career Adapt-ability Scale
CCT	Career Construction Theory
CONS	Conscientiousness
DOSM	Department of Statistics Malaysia
HEI	Higher Education Institutes
HRD	Human Resource Development
IPIP	International Personality Item Pool
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
SE	Self-Esteem
SI	Spiritual Intelligence
SISRI	Intelligence Self-Report Inventory
SS	Social Support
STFCD	System Theory Framework of Career Develeopment
UMP	Universiti Malaysia Pahang
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the insight of this study which include background of the study, problem statement, and research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study and definition of terms/operational definition. The overall study will be focusing on human resource development where the researcher will explore the expectation and understanding career adaptability among junior employees in Malaysia's context.

1.1 Research Background

In this twenty-first century, job prospects worldwide are impacted by various challenges such as globalisation, and technological advancement. These challenges have fundamentally changed economic policies and global trade activities, especially in terms of human capital, an aspect of significant interest by governments across all countries (Mzee, 2012). For example, under the condition of rapid global trade and technologies, productivity and job vacancy increased. However, if the balance of those factors is not in control, it will add up the unemployment rate and income inequality. For example, globalization in labour market, data processing centres of financial institutions in UK and US has migrated to Malaysia. Obviously, UK and US citizens will lose their job and job opportunities will increased in Malaysia. Rapid change in technologies have also led to increasing demands for adaptation to new working environment. Industrial revolution 4.0 has brought new perspective in business acumen and employment. Industrial revolution 4.0 initiative allows organisation to combine and communicate with technologies, in order to make decision without human involvement, internet of things (IoT) and systems (Sampoerna University, 2022). According to Chang (2019), the workplace can be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. For example, in labour-intensive productions, such technologies and automations has slightly nudged the employment opportunities and forcing the existing employees to learn recent technologies in fast-paced environment. It is not easy to implement changes to the organisations. Therefore, individuals have to adapt with the new demand and challenges of using technologies as part of daily task.

Recently, the global pandemic caused by coronavirus (Covid-19) has infected 28 million individuals worldwide. This unfortunate event has impacted economic activities globally, including Malaysia. The business setup and schooling are changing due to pandemic lockdown. The government has instructed employees to work from home with an exception for essential service operator, and students attended online learning. At this point, each individual has no choice but to adapt with unfamiliar environment. Work from home regime is challenging since they do not experience the organisational climate at home, and they find it difficult to

focus due to frequently being disturbed by family members (Chanana, 2020; Sahni, 2020; Ojo, Fawehinmi, & Mohd Yusoff, 2021). The significant burden of this situation concurred that human actions are shaped through interaction among environmental, personal, and individual factors (Ojo, Fawehinmi, & Mohd Yusoff, 2021). Hence, organisation and co-worker's support and concern towards employees play significant role in adaptability to the new working condition.

In Malaysia, the labour market has changed substantially in recent years due to economic crisis in which organisations has gone downsizing, retrenchment and limited recruitment. Based on Central Bank of Malaysia annual report, there are 35,097 employees has been laid off in 2017 due to company downsizing and closing. Losing employees not only impact the organization, the quality life of the employees also will be change. Furthermore, the organisation has to restructure, the business may have new strategies, and existing employees may encounter certain organisational changes. The implication of changes not only affect the business or organization, but also the employees that has to be flexible in facing those crises to remain competitive in labour market.

Malaysia is not immune to these challenges. In recent times, the slow-down in the Malaysian economy, triggered by declining global growth, has adversely affected human resource development and employment opportunities, especially for new graduates and junior employees. Although the unemployment rate of 3.36% (Department of Statistics, 2018) is generally considered low and should not be a cause for concern, most of the job offers or vacancies, however, are in the blue-collar industries (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). As job opportunities for graduates are not plentiful, jobseekers may have to take up jobs for which they are over-qualified. Moreover, graduates may have difficulty getting hired because their fields of study have not provided them with the requisite expertise or skills required by certain jobs, thus giving rise to the problem of skill mismatch (Koen, Asada, Nixon, Rahuman and Arif, 2017).

Skill mismatch in Malaysia is not a new scenario (Norman *et al.*, 2018). Declining global growth has slowed the human capital development, labour market skills mismatches, and insufficient small business innovation also present challenges for Malaysians (Koen, Asada, Nixon, Rahuman, & Arif, 2017). This phenomenon could result in individuals having to adapt themselves to situations outside of their expectations in order to secure a job offer. For example, one graduate has a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree and being employed in banking industry or others but sciences. To make ends meet, graduates may therefore have little option but to accept any job offer that is available regardless their university courses/degree which a problem that leads to skills mismatch.

Even though education attainment has increased among young Malaysian, there has been limited attention paid to skill mismatch between graduates and their qualification or skills that required in their workplace (Zakariya & Khoo, 2016; Mehta et al., 2011). In Malaysian context, the employers have expressed

concern that many graduates were unprepared for challenging world of work (Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), 2017; Kavita & Sharma, 2011). This is a loss to some stakeholders such as HEI unable to produce expected employees in certain industries, new graduates struggling to manifest their skills and knowledge, and employers must train new employees due to lack of skills. If the new graduates are hired but have unrelated education attainment/skills to its job, how do the new graduates adapt to their new task and working environment? Other issues such as working in different field from their academic qualification is salary, where they could earn more or less than they should (Battu & Zakariya, 2015). Probably, these issues could be an impact from unsuitable job vacancy available. However, they need to be employed or self-employed in order to survive and sustain. Therefore, adaptability to individual's career could be considered crucial.

Social and economic development have changed the perception of world of work and the lives of new graduates. The ever-changing career climate has put the new graduates in difficulties to manifest successful transition from school to work (Han & Rojewski, 2015; Suleman, 2016; ILO, 2011; Kahn, 2010). Prior to employment, new graduate being a student in university or college strive to achieve good grades. During employment, they strive to be productive and maintaining job performance. However, striving in university or college environment is different from working environment. Concerning to career development perspective, graduates who has part-time job experience able to understand world of work but not all graduate does part-time job. The challenges faced by graduates during transition from school to world of work needs social support from colleagues, family, and friends. For example, during difficulties of getting employed, graduates rely on their family for financial support and friends for shoulder to cry on. Workplace social support, on the other hand, would aid new entry employees in adjusting to their new working environment.

Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed has introduced Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 which has seven thrusts (MyGovernment, 2019). One of the thrust is focusing on talent and labour force reformation. This strategic thrust aim to ensure Malaysians is more productive in which, by redesigning human capital development and skills building programmes in private and public sectors. Based on Ministry of Education Malaysia survey of Graduate Tracer Study, more than 30% (in which 12.2% from public universities) of the graduates unable to be employed within six months after graduation with various reasons (MOHE, 2019). In a 2020 survey of employers conducted by Talentbank, they discovered that most employers felt local new graduates were not ready to take on career challenges fairly quickly (Talentbank, 2020). The employer still complained that new graduate's quality is low and the graduate's skills below their expectations (Tanius et al., 2019). Hence, there are few programs that has been introduced by government to increase graduates' skills and employability such as Skim Latihan 1Malaysia (SL1M), Graduate Career Accelerated Program (GCAP), and Graduate Employability Training Scheme (GETS). Despite the said government effort, the issue of graduates lacking in confidence, personality, and skills persists. (Tengku et. al, 2019). In the qualitative study of Tengku et. Al (2019), they discovered that the participants all agreed that during interviews,

the new graduates feel anxious and low level of confident. Having good academic records, why graduates still feel lack of confidence which become obstacle for them getting hired or to fit in?

Good academic does not promise an employment but the priority deciding factor of hiring graduates include personality, characteristic, and attribute (Ismail, 2017). Past studies has also indicated that personality plays important role in workplace (Lim & Yazdanifard, 2014; Martin, 2010). Employees with personality such as conscientiousness being describes as the tendency to be responsible, organised, hardworking, goal-oriented, and abide by the rules (Li et al., 2015). These characteristics are key ingredients and essential at workplace. According to Succi & Canovi (2020) communication skills is the most appreciated skills by employers. The findings also show that commitment to work and teamwork skills are ranked as the most important soft skills to enhance graduate employability. But how to communicate or interact with each other if individual has low self-esteem, no commitment to work due to lack of conscientiousness, and unable to work in a team if low social support. Self-esteem is a dimension that stretches full spectrum of behaviour, development, personality, or identity (Mruk, 2013, p.3). For instance, individual with low self-esteem experience more of negative emotion which can affect mental health. Conscientiousness describes as the tendency to be responsible, organised, hardworking, goal-oriented, and abide by the rules. These characteristics are key ingredients and essential at workplace. Contribution of positive result in spiritual belief leads individual to avoid acting deviant or in destructive ways, socially and personally (Emmons, 2000a). These three points might affect their ability to adapt with working environment and task given. Therefore, career adaptability is one of the criteria that could enhance their employability regardless any field of industries they are being hired. It is hope that graduates' career adaptability will impact their self-improvement and career. The next section is an overview of career adaptability and individual factors.

1.2 Brief overview of Career Adaptability and Individual Factors in HRD

All employees and future graduates need to be prepared in any circumstances in order to be an asset to the country, community, and organization. Therefore, Human Resource Development (HRD) plays important role in preparing individual to enter challenging atmosphere especially in world of work (Nilsson & Ellström, 2012; Weinberger, 1998). The importance of Human Resource Development (HRD) is human resource or human capital in labour market as a driving force of organizations' success. HRD is referring to individual development through formal and informal activities to enhance knowledge, skills, experience, and competencies (Gilley et al., 2002). Three main competencies in HRD are Training and Development, Organization Development, and Career Development and the expected results from HRD are productivity, quality, innovation, HR fulfilment, and readiness for change (McLagan, 1989). Even though the level of success in HRD is not written in organization's profit and loss report, it is imperative to highlight the human capital in determining the performance of the organization. The human capital resources have become the

core for innovative and productive high-income economy (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014).

Career Development is part of HRD field and focusing on individuals' career journey since schooling. Recent trends in Career Development have led to a proliferation of studies that career adaptability has become imperative among college and university student as well as employees (Coetzee & Harry, 2014; Guan et al., 2017; Klehe, Zikic, van Vianen, Koen, & Buyken, 2012; Monteiro & Almeida, 2015). Entering labour market, new graduates may find that career world or world of work is a new environment for them. Leaving students' life and entering new episode as employees requires important career-related decision in order to achieve career success (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the issues of the economic stress such as job insecurity, unemployment, and underemployment would be a challenge for graduates as they are among the first to suffer. The challenge has forced the employees to have the ability of adapting, adjusting and display adaptability to new environment and it is a salient point in being flexible with labour market uncertainty. Therefore, the study of career adaptability has become relevant as it significantly noted as successful career development, lead to job satisfaction and better employment quality (Chan et al., 2015; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Zacher, 2015).

1.3 Statement of Problem

Career adaptability is not new in career development study. The concept has been expanded to different sample since the career adaptability instrument became available in 2012, and it consistently found its applicability across many countries (Ng et al., 2022). Some of the studies related to career adaptability focusing on undergraduate students (Ebenehi, Rashid, & Bakar, 2016; Li, Hou, & Feng, 2013), adolescence (Di Maggio et al., 2015; Hirschi, 2010), school students (de Guzman & Choi, 2013), employees (Akkermans et al., 2018; Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi, & Rossier, 2013). Based on career construction theory, individual must adapt to the demands imposed on them to work, play, and form relationship (Savickas et al., 2009). As far as it addresses social expectations that individual prepare for, and participate in their work roles, the career construction model of adaptation focuses solely on the work role (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). However, the majority of chosen sample population consists of undergraduate students and less from junior employees. Thus, the researcher assumed that career adaptability is best being assessed to junior employees as they have transitioned from school to work environment. Furthermore, the discourse of career adaptability in Malaysia is not established. Thus, this research could add in some knowledge to Malaysia specifically.

Past research has advocated that individual factor such as self-concept (Coetzee, Ferreira, & Potgieter, 2015; Da Silva & Teixeira, 2013; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010), personality (Chong & Leong, 2015; Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2016; Tews, Stafford, & Tracey, 2011), intelligence (Dacre Pool &

Qualter, 2013; Marques, 2006; Mérida-López, Extremera, Quintana-Orts, & Rey, 2019), and support (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Ozdemir, 2016) positively contribute to graduate career success. For example, System Theory Framework of Career Development explains that individual system has recursive interaction with the process system in which individual factors influence the chances and changes in career development. In addition, Super's theory helping people to clarify, articulate, and implement their life role self-concept development which he acknowledges personal and situational determinants influence career development (Niles & Harris Bowsby, 2013). However, Career Construction Theory (CCT) does not discuss in depth about individual factors that related to career adaptability unlike STFC and Super's theory. Thus, the researcher incorporates the individual factors to be assessed with CCT. Therefore, individual factors viz. self-esteem, conscientiousness, and spiritual intelligence will be hypothesised as the factors that potentially influence the graduates in career adaptability.

The studies on self-esteem is evidently relevant as it proves the relationship and contribution of high self-esteem leads to positive outcomes for individual and society (Cai et al., 2015; Janeiro, Mota, & Ribas, 2014; van de Hof, 2015). However, on the dark side, there are studies that claimed if a person has high self-esteem, it will lead to narcissism which is not a favourable characteristic (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Contrary to the expectations that self-esteem has influence the career in general, self-esteem was not found to be related with career confidence yet found positively related with career control and career concern (Öncel, 2014). The inconsistency of the result sparks the interest in examining the variable.

Even though the discourse of self-esteem is well documented, the researcher find it hard to not to include this dimension in this study as the development of self-esteem may change over time (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). Hence, most researcher concurred that it is possible to revisit self-esteem dimension across time especially among graduates. However, most of the studies related to self-esteem are measuring general self-esteem (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006; Gemeay, Ahmed, Ahmad, & Al-Mahmoud, 2015; Janeiro et al., 2014; Rasul, Abd Rauf, Mansor, & Puvanasvaran, 2012; Schmitt & Allik, 2005). In this context of research, specific self-esteem viz. professional self-esteem will be measured for the selected population. Therefore, self-esteem will be examined as one of the individual factors related to career adaptability in junior employees' profession.

Other than self-esteem, personality traits such as Five-factor model of personality often being studies in career development. Based on the past studies, conscientiousness shows consistent validities across organisations, jobs, and situations (Barrick & Mount, 2005; Hogan & Ones, 1997; Mount, Barrick, & Strauss, 1999; Poropat, 2009). Thus, the research not intended to test all the personality traits and only focusing on conscientiousness. Most of the studies were cross-sectional survey whereby the data was collected at one specific time. Therefore, the researcher wants to replicate the study by testing to

the selected population in this research and would be deemed relevant to be examined.

Spiritual dimension was being neglected in most of the studies among graduates (Love & Talbot, 2009) and career adaptability (Duffy, 2010). Based on Malaysia's Education Philosophy, spiritual dimension is needed to produce holistic graduates for career success. Holistic in this sense is premised on each student or graduate having to find identity, meaning and purpose, skills and knowledge in life that could contribute to the success of individual, nation, and community. Past studies have indicated that spiritual is the important factor in individual development (Fry & Wigglesworth, 2013; Hosseini, Elias, Krauss, & Aishah, 2010; Vaughan, 2002). Therefore, examining spiritual intelligence as part of career development is relevant to Malaysian graduates. Furthermore, the theoretical classification or model explaining the spiritual intelligence that contributes to graduates' career adaptability is quite limited (Duffy & Blustein, 2005). Hence, this research may shed the light of spiritual intelligence among graduates.

Social support has been linked to many benefits for both physical and mental health (Siewert, Antoni, Kubiak, & Weber, 2011). For example, individuals spend more time at work. Therefore, interaction with colleagues would be as important as with family. Workplace social support is not only limited to work-related issues but also includes motivation, sense of belonging, and friendship. For example, discrimination issues at workplace may affect an individual's motivation and career satisfaction. Thus, having supportive colleagues around could reduce the burden of stress at workplace. The social support received from colleagues including supervisors may influence the individual to trust the organisation and management and thus, the individual displays a positive attitude in which led to job performance (Nicole, 2008). Therefore, it is an interest to examine the factor of social support (from workplace) among Malaysian junior employees.

Most of the studies focusing on relationship between social support and career adaptability but not on moderating role of social support. Creed et al. (2009) and Zacher (2016) advocated that there is a potential that social support could enhance career adaptability or also possible there is no relationship at all. There is one study in psychogeriatrics from Khusaifan & El Keshky (2017) made an assessment on social support as mediator and the result found that social support only has partial mediation. In a study of Blanch (2016), social support was not behaving as mediator between demand and job strain. It would be difficult to make references whether social support was truly a mediator or moderator due to inconsistency of the results. As far as the researcher's knowledge, the mediation analysis of social support especially on career adaptability was not found. The study on moderating role of social support on individual and career development especially in career adaptability is also limited. Hence, the inconsistent result of moderation effect in a study of social support also triggers an interest for the researcher to examine the significance.

Based on the above statements, the researcher would be examining whether there is any relationship between individual factors such as self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, social support, and career adaptability? To what extent the level of contribution of these factors toward career adaptability? and which factor contribute the most towards career adaptability? In addition, the researcher would examine whether there is a moderating role of social support between these said factors and career adaptability? The next section explains the research objectives of this study.

1.4 Research Objective

The main objective of the study is to examine the individual factors that contributes toward career adaptability among graduates in Malaysia. Below are the research objectives for this study.

1. To determine the level of career adaptability, self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, and social support among junior employees.
2. To examine the association between self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, social support, and career adaptability among junior employees.
3. To examine the moderating role of social support on the relationship between self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence towards career adaptability among junior employees.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Significance of the study describes the reason why the present research is important. The work environment has undergone changes in nature of work which result from innovation, development of new knowledge, competition and other factors (Morshidi et al., 2012; Brown et al., 2003; Sennett, 2006). Questions has been raised about the ability of the graduates facing the challenge in world of work. A numbers of studies have demonstrate that it is imperative to have adapt-ability in pursuing career especially in world of work (Coetzee et al., 2015; Duffy, 2010; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Hirschi, 2009; Zacher, 2016). There are evidence that career adaptability play a crucial role in career decision (Duffy, 2010), employability skills (Boahin & Hofman, 2013; Chien, 2015), career self-management (Lent & Brown, 2013), and sense of control and life satisfaction (Hirschi, 2009). Therefore, this section elaborates how the study would be beneficial to all stakeholders. The researcher believes that this research will bring benefits and inevitably important to the certain parties.

In academic perspective, this research is significance and set to expand the framework of individual factors within career adaptability, hence will enrich the theoretical/framework corpus. Due to pandemic and economic downturn, career adaptability among employees has become a relevant discourse nowadays.

Thus, the purpose of this research is aimed to shed light on career adaptability as readiness to cope with working situation. Career adaptability is a continuous issue and is likely to be revisited over many times as adapt ability may change along individual's maturity. Therefore, the study of career adaptability is not yet exhaustive and might considered novel.

Most of the past studies of career adaptability were focusing on undergraduate students and adolescence which still has no experience in world of work. Therefore, there is limited empirical research on career adaptability of the graduate who has already enter world of work. The outcome of this study could benefit the researcher to expand some new information about career adaptability among Malaysian graduates. On the other hand, employing social supports as moderating variable has derived interesting outcome as contribution to body of knowledge. The combination of self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, and social supports as proposed determinants of individual factors has also never being tested together. Therefore, this research hopefully will provide a framework that can increase future researchers' knowledge toward understanding the needs of redesigning new program and talent development of the graduates especially related to identity and spiritual prior or during the employment. Also, the researcher hope that the importance of career adaptability of graduates will be soaring to reach individual's career goal and opening new doors to future researcher to continue the study in this field.

In Southeast Asia, there are only 27.5% of Malaysia's labour force is composed of highly skilled workers, as compared to significantly higher proportions in Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Korea (Perbadanan Produktiviti Malaysia, 2019). To produce knowledgeable workers for the next generation, the government will continue to strengthen the policy, especially promoting a program for developing talent and delivering high standards of higher education systems. There are few graduate's programs has been introduced by the government such as Skim Latihan 1Malaysia (SL1M) and Graduate Career Accelerated Program (GCAP) which enhance graduate employability, working environment adaptability, and identity. However, the statistics still showing that unemployment rate still not much improved (based on Central Bank of Malaysia annual report 2018) and employers responded that character, attitude, and personality still lacking (based on Malaysia's popular job search engine, Jobstreet.com, has done an employers' survey). Therefore, it is hope that the new programs of talent and career development are not only focusing on skills but graduates' spiritual aspect as in line with our National Education Philosophy to produce holistic graduates. This research will offer a little contribution to the body of knowledge and adding empirical data to this field, at least will assist any government body and researchers such as Ministry of Human Resources or Ministry of Higher Education to induce future research on career adaptability.

Malaysia have been steadfast in undertaking labour market new policy reform such as improving accessibility to higher education and enhancing labour skill to stay competitive. HEI are being placed under pressure as they play the key role in producing graduates with necessary skills and knowledge. The intention of

designing the new curriculum by putting career 'readiness' as priority into university programs or career courses is expected to enhance career adaptability in challenging labour market. The finding of this research would be valued to all stakeholders to further understand on the needs of producing good quality of the graduates and indirectly contribute to Malaysian economy as to have a holistic graduates/employees. The junior employees are the most vulnerable to unstable economic environment; they are likely to be the last to be hired and the first to be made redundant, due to their lack of experience, higher information asymmetry on the labour market, and poor ability to communicate their skills effectively to employers (Central Bank of Malaysia, 2017). While a lot of media attention has been focused on the unfortunate retrenched workers, slower hiring has had a wider impact on the economy, affecting particularly young adults and new jobseekers. With further understanding the demand of industry in hiring employable graduate, consultation and discussion with industrial sector is needed and both parties should aware what are the criteria should the student possess in order to become employable graduates. Employable graduates should have awareness of their career adaptability so that they could increase productivity of the industries. Hence, they will be an asset to the country towards becoming developed countries.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research on career development field is broad and has been studied extensively in various area. There are many aspects that can be explored in the study of new graduates/junior employees' career development such as government intervention, curriculum design, policy, marketing and etc. The scope of this study is focusing on career adaptability of junior employees. If considering the antecedents or predictors of career adaptability, there many factors and construct that can be studied. Furthermore, career adaptability is not the only characteristic that portray career success/employability. Other factors such as career resilience, career performance, and career satisfaction are also potential contributing factors. However, the researcher has narrowed down the scope of this study on career adaptability by examine individual factors such as self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, and social support. Basically, the variable of social support can be treated as mediator and/or moderator based on researchers' objective of the study, but this research examines the moderation role between self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, and career adaptability.

This research mainly focuses on four selected universities in Malaysia's graduates. The respective graduate is a bachelor's degree graduate in 2018 who is at least has 3-months timeframe in their employment in various sectors/organisation. Hence, the researcher is looking at junior employees' adaptability in their transition from university to working life and holding entry level position. Therefore, this research could not be generalised to all junior employees from other population. In addition, this cohort has been chosen as the selected population due to limited study on junior employees in Malaysian context. It is hope that the finding could contribute empirical data to the

knowledge in this field. Apart from that, this research also be based on the respondents' own perceptions as the instrument used in this research is self-reported survey, where the findings might be bias to respondents' own beliefs and understanding. As the scope of the study is mentioned, the next section explains the definition of term that has been used in this research.

1.7 Limitation and Delimitation

There are several limitations and delimitations to this research. The sample representative of this research was only junior employees possesses bachelor's degree. It will be impossible to assess all junior employees with different qualification nationwide due to time constrain. Thus, the generalisability of the findings was limited to all junior employees with bachelor's degree. Furthermore, the most important limitation lies in the fact that Malaysia has limited statistical data to referred to and some of the data was not a current data. Cooperation and bureaucracy from some universities also an issue that could not be avoided. Therefore, to get the full listing of population or information is difficult. Hence, the researcher adopted multi-cluster sampling technique instead of simple random sampling. It is still impossible to get a truly random sample, even though the researcher carefully and accurately described the sample size calculation rests on the assumption of the ability to achieve a random sample.

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents through personal administered and online. Therefore, there were potential inaccuracy or misunderstanding on the meaning of the questions. There is also limitation whereby the control variables such as gender, age, location was not assessed. This may create potential confounding variables in which may result hidden effect on the outcome of the research. The instruments adopted in this research was chosen based on past literature and it was available with no charges. Despite that, the reliability and validity of the data were tested, and acceptable results were produced. There is a possibility that using other instruments than the one used in this research will result in entirely different outcomes.

The methodology used was a quantitative approach using structured close-ended questions. Thus, the respondent needs to depend on the questions selection given and the research may potentially miss the opportunity to other responses possibilities. By employing quantitative approach, the in-depth understanding of the subjects is not feasible to acquire from the respondents. In spite of this, the discussion of the findings adds some subjective perspective to the insight of the study. Lastly, this research is cross-sectional survey. The criteria of cross-sectional study whereas involves examine the data from the population at one specific point in time. The outcome could potentially different if the researcher employs longitudinal study. The next section explains the definition of term that has been used in this research.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The following are the key terms and the operational definitions of the research.

Career

The sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his pre-occupational, occupational, and post-occupational life; includes work-related roles such as those of student, employee, and pensioner, together with complementary avocational, familial, and civic roles (Super, 1976).

Operational term:

In this research, career will be operationalised as the junior employees' experience in world of work (employment/ occupational life).

Career adaptability

Individual's psychosocial capacity for dealing with vocational development, transitions, and traumas in world of work (Savickas, 1997).

Operational term:

In this research, the career adaptability would be operationalised as the graduate's ability to adapt with any working environment or situations based on concern, control, confidence, and curiosity.

Self-esteem

An individual's positive evaluation of the self (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006; Cai et al., 2015; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995).

Operational term:

In this research, self-esteem would be operationalised as personal appraisal and self-worth of his or her value in coping with work environment.

Conscientiousness

Defined as social conformity and impulse control i.e. the degree to which a person makes an effortless adaptation to authority (Hogan & Ones, 1997).

Operational term:

In this research, conscientiousness would be operationalised as the individual with characteristic of industrious and orderliness towards career.

Spiritual intelligence

A set of mental capacities that contribute to the awareness, integration and adaptive application of non-material and transcendent facets of one's life, contributing to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, identification of transcendent selves, and mastery of spiritual states (King, 2008).

Operational term:

In this research, spiritual intelligence be operationalised as the ability to be aware, integrate, and adaptive application of the nonmaterial and transcendent aspects in which individual apply in workplace.

Social support

Acts of others that are either helpful or meant to be helpful (Harris, Winkowski, & Engdahl, 2007).

Operational term:

In this research, social support would be operationalised as the assistance in any form of support by colleagues (includes supervisor) at workplace.

Junior Employees

Referring to new entrant employees that hold bachelor's degree and being employed for at least 3 month and not more than 2 years.

The next section presents the thesis organisation for this research.

1.9 Thesis Organisation

This section presents the brief summaries of the thesis in which organised from chapter 1 to chapter 5 as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the research by presenting the background of the study and statement of problem. Followed by that, research objectives are presented. Then the research significance to future researcher, practitioner, and policy maker is explained. Further sections present the scope of the study and definition of term. This chapter ends with thesis organisation and chapter summary.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter explain the brief introduction of relevant theories and the concept of each variables chosen. The literature review starts with the definition, concept, and past studies of career adaptability in which act as dependent variable. The independent variables are consisted of the individual factors in which includes self-esteem, conscientiousness, spiritual intelligence, and social support. The chapter ends with chapter summary.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology starts with research paradigm and research process. This is followed by research framework and research design in which explains the particular method that has been used in this research. Then the next section explains the sampling design which includes

target population, unit of analysis, sample size, sampling technique, and data collection procedure. After that, data analysis procedure, reliability, validity, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is explained. The chapter also reports on pre-test and pilot test of the research. The chapter ends with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and measurement model of the research. Chapter summary followed after that.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussions

This chapter starts with descriptive analysis and then followed by multivariate analysis. The discussion relates the findings to the result in the existing literatures and theories and provide an insights into the current scenario of career adaptability in Malaysia. The chapter ends with chapter summary.

Chapter 5: Research Summary, Conclusion, Contributions, and Recommendation

This chapter explains the conclusion of this research. Then the chapter proceeds with recommendation and contribution of the research to the theoretical, practitioners and policy makers. The study limitation is explained after that, then the chapter ends with future research suggestion.

1.10 Summary

The beginning of this chapter describes the insight of career adaptability and self-esteem, conscientiousness, and spiritual intelligence. The moderation role of social support that help the graduates in world of work also has briefly been discussed. It also discusses the gaps that has been found related to career adaptability, and the significance of the study that could potentially benefit to stakeholders and national economic. The next chapter will explain on literature review related to the study.

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