



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF SELF-PERCEIVED
EMPLOYABILITY INSTRUMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

WONG SIEW PING

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EMPLOYABILITY INSTRUMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

By

WONG SIEW PING

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti
Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

February 2020

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

DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF SELF-PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY INSTRUMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

By

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February 2020

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The unemployment issue among university graduates in Malaysia remains unresolved. Universities play a vital role in dealing with this problem as one of the main functions of tertiary education is to produce graduates with employability to join the competing job market. It is necessary to study undergraduate students' perceived employability as it portrays students' willingness to change and adapt to possible working environments. However, there is a lack of psychometrically tested students' self-perceived employability instrument in Malaysian context. This study aims to identify students' conceptualization of employability, and develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure undergraduate students' self-perceived employability. A mixed method research design and purposive sampling involving two private universities in Selangor were applied. With a qualitative approach, randomly selected final-year undergraduate students in a private university were interviewed to explore students' conceptualization of employability and their employability attributes. Employability models were reviewed and a theoretical model of five-factor was proposed. A total of 113 items were written for Self-Perceived Employability Instrument based on the literature and the qualitative findings. Through content validation, items were amended based on the experts' feedback, resulted in 112 items. A quantitative approach was conducted in another private university. Random sampling was applied and two groups of sample were determined for factor analyses. In exploratory factor analysis, 112 items were reduced to 33 items in seven factors, namely career resilience, human and social capital, teamwork, conscientiousness, critical thinking, academic, and leadership. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the seven-factor model. Construct validity provided more psychometric properties of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was also proven. Self-perceived Employability Instrument is useful to reflect final-year undergraduate students' job readiness and the effectiveness of the higher

education institutions in producing graduates with high employability. However, the usage of the instrument might be limited to private university students.



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

**PEMBINAAN DAN PENGESAHAN INSTRUMEN KEMAMPUAN
BERDASARKAN PERSEPSI KENDIRI UNTUK PELAJAR SARJANA MUDA
INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI SWASTA**

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Isu pengangguran di kalangan graduan di Malaysia masih belum dapat diselesaikan. Institusi pengajian tinggi memainkan peranan penting dalam menangani masalah ini memandangkan salah satu fungsi utama pendidikan tinggi adalah untuk menghasilkan graduan yang mempunyai kemampuan kebolehkeraan untuk bersaing dalam pasaran pekerjaan. Kebolehkeraan persepsi diri pelajar sarjana muda perlu dikaji kerana ia menggambarkan kesanggupan pelajar untuk berubah dan menyesuaikan diri dengan perselantaran kerja. Namun, ia adalah mencabar untuk mendapat instrumen kebolehkeraan yang sahih dalam konteks Malaysia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti konsep kebolehkeraan daripada persepsi pelajar, dan membina instrumen kebolehkeraan persepsi diri yang sah dan boleh dipercayai untuk mengukur kebolehkeraan pelajar sarjana muda tahun terakhir. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kaedah campuran dan persampelan bertujuan yang melibatkan dua universiti swasta di Selangor digunakan. Pendekatan kualitatif dilakukan dengan menemubual pelajar sarjana muda tahun terakhir untuk mengenalpasti konsep pelajar mengenai kebolehkeraan dan atribut kebolehkeraan mereka. Model-model kebolehkeraan dikaji dan model teori dengan lima faktor dicadangkan. Sebanyak 113 item ditulis untuk Instrumen Kebolehkeraan Persepsi Diri berdasarkan literatur dan dapatan kualitatif. Melalui pengesahan kandungan, item dibetulkan berdasarkan maklum balas pakar dan dikurangkan menjadi 112 item. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan di sebuah universiti swasta yang lain. Persampelan rawak diaplikasikan dan dua kumpulan sampel ditentukan untuk analisis faktor. Dalam analisis faktor eksploratori, 112 item dikurangkan menjadi 33 item dalam tujuh faktor, iaitu daya kebingkasan kerja, modal insan dan sosial, kerjasama, kesungguhan, pemikiran kritis, akademik dan kepemimpinan. Analisis faktor pengesahan mengesahkan model kebolehkeraan ini. Pengesahan konstruk melanjutkan sifat psikometrik instrument. Kebolehppercayaan instrument juga terbukti. Instrumen Kebolehkeraan Persepsi Diri berguna untuk

menunjukkan kesediaan bekerja pelajar sarjana muda tahun terakhir dan keberkesanan institusi pengajian tinggi dalam menghasilkan graduan yang berkemampuan kebolehtkerjaan tinggi. Namun, penggunaan instrument tersebut mungkin terhad kepada pelajar university swasta.



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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

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CR	Construct Reliability
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
RMSEA	Root Means Square Error of Approximation
SD	Standard Deviation



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the background of the study which focuses on university students' employability. This is followed by the research objectives and research questions. Moreover, significance of the study was discussed. Scope and limitations of the study were then described. Lastly, operational definition of term was given.

1.2 Background of the Study

The most significant function of higher education institutions is to establish a quality human resource that contributes in-country development. Hence, the employability of the graduates will as well represent the effectiveness of higher education institutions. MOHE had aimed to produce graduates who are competent to fulfill the national as well as international demand of workforce with 75 percent of the graduates getting jobs related to their fields of study within six months after they graduated (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011c). To assess this objective, Graduate Tracer Study had been conducted since the year 2006 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012a). This study was carried out through an online interview where graduates who were eligible to attend their convocation employment rate answered the questionnaire online. The system was opened for the graduates three months before the convocation until a week after the convocation. The study aims to reveal the status of fresh graduates in careers within six months after they graduate. According to the latest reports from Graduate Tracer Study (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018), the aim of producing graduates who are competent to fulfill the national as well as international demand of workforce with 75 percent of the graduates getting jobs related to their fields of study within six months after they graduated is already achieved.

In the latest Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015), the Ministry is aspired to increase graduate employability to greater than 80 percent by the year 2025. MOHE had examined the factors that influence fresh graduates' employability which contribute to their employment and it was revealed in the National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012-2017 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012b) that graduates' poor attributes have been identified as one of the challenges of graduates' employability.

Employers currently are more inclined to employ graduates who have employability skills and qualities in addition to expertise in their field (DEST,

2002). Employees are expected to not only possess basic academic skills such as reading, writing, counting, speaking and listening, but also higher-order thinking skills like reasoning, analyzing, evaluating, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making and problem-solving. In addition, personal attributes of graduates such as responsibility, social skills, cooperative, confidence, self-management and self-directedness play a vital role in the process of selecting employees.

Literature has clearly shown that skills and attitude may enhance an individual's chance to obtain employment or remain in employment (Fugate, Kinicki and Ashford, 2004; van der Heijde and van der Heijden, 2006). A number of researches have agreed that employability depends on a list of attributes (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Bridgstock, 2009; Fugate, et al., 2004; Fugate and Kinicki, 2008; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Pool and Sewell, 2007; van der Heijde and van der Heijden, 2006). These attributes include knowledge and skills (Bridgstock, 2009; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Pool and Sewell, 2007; van der Heijde and van der Heijden, 2006), adaptability (Fugate, et al., 2004; Fugate and Kinicki, 2008), resilience (Bezuidenhout, 2011; Fugate and Kinicki, 2008; van der Heijde and van der Heijden, 2006) career management (Bridgstock, 2009; Hillage and Pollard, 1998), and social capital (Fugate, et al., 2004; van der Heijde and van der Heijden, 2006).

In an increasingly competitive workplace nowadays, the assumption of having a tertiary degree will guarantee employment is no longer applicable. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has always been very concerned about the quality of the graduates produced. Thus, university graduates' employability has been one of the critical agenda projects highlighted in National Education Action Plan since the year 2007 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007) and it is still one of the ongoing critical agenda projects in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) (Ministry of Higher Education, 2015).

To improve university students' employability, National Education Action Plan (MOHE, 2007) has developed a profile of the desired human capital with the first-class mentality which consists of three principles: knowledge, personal, and interpersonal attributes. Knowledge attributes involve a student mastering and apply knowledge of core subjects, mastering languages, being passionate for knowledge, knowing general knowledge, appreciating arts, culture and sports, having analysis and problem-solving skills, and being aware of business and management principles and technology. As for personal attributes, it includes being goal-oriented, intellectually engaging, quick in learning, entrepreneurial, ethically and morally upright, spiritually grounded, and compassionate and caring. The third principle, interpersonal attributes is related to communication skills, relatedness, professional networks, leadership and teamwork. To ensure that university students are instilled with these three types of attributes, higher education institutions play a very vital role.

National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012-2017 (MOHE, 2012b) suggested an employability attributes framework (EAF). There were four generic attributes suggested based on employers' perspective: academic, personality management, exploration and connectivity. Academic dimension is related to good academic achievement, joined co-curricular activities and being exposed to their field in reality while personal management includes positive attitudes and leadership skills. The exploration dimension requires students to be critical and creative while connectivity is similar to interpersonal attribute mentioned in National Education Action Plan (MOHE, 2007).

In relation to this, a number of researches were carried out in Malaysia to explore graduates' employability. The studies used self-administered questionnaires and required the graduates to measure their own employability (Ismail, 2011; Mahazan, Siti Nubailah, Umami Salwa & Wan Mohd Fazril Azdi, 2015; Rahmat, Ayub & Buntat, 2016). Some researchers referred to this as perceived employability (Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell, 2008). Rothwell, et al. defined perceived employability as "the perceived ability to obtain sustainable employment appropriate to one's qualification level (p.2)." Graduates assess their chances of success to get a particular form of job and examine the factors that affect their perceptions. Perceived employability was consistently used and accepted as representing employability levels in the samples.

Some researchers developed their employability instruments based on past studies or literature (Mahazan, Siti Nubailah, Umami Salwa & Wan Mohd Fazril Azdi, 2015; Rahmat, Ayub & Buntat, 2016) while others did not specify the origin of the instrument used (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008; Ismail, 2011). According to these instruments, the constructs of employability include interpersonal (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008; Ismail, 2011), leadership (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008; Ismail, 2011; Mahazan, et al., 2015), intrapersonal, technical (Ismail, 2011), communication, ICT, teamwork (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008; Mahazan, et al., 2015; Rahmat, Ayub & Buntat, 2016), critical thinking (Mahazan, et al., 2015; Rahmat, et al., 2016), problem-solving (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008; Rahmat, Ayub & Buntat, 2016), religiosity, entrepreneurship, ethics (Mahazan, et al., 2015), English language proficiency, adaptability, risk-taking, creativity, time management (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008), personal qualities, organizational and continuously learning skills (Rahmat, et al., 2016). According to the subconstructs included, these instruments were found to mostly consist of skills related to employability, rather than personal attributes and strengths.

Based on the growing body of knowledge in this area, the conceptualization of employability has been broadened to include personal attributes besides a set of skills to gain employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Clarke, 2017). Employability attributes involve psychological components such as self-exploratory, guidance seeking, proactivity and career management in forming the character of a person towards career success. Many employers will usually invest in talents who have the right characters and attitudes as these are considered as valuable asset to an organization or a company (Bridgstock, 2009). That is why it is important to

have the right psychological components imbued in an employability scale to ensure that it has good predictive capability. Moreover, a good employability scale can also be used by education institutions for early interventions towards developing the right attitude and characters that will increase their “value” in the workplace.

Literature has shown that there is scarce research on instrument development for undergraduate students’ perceived employability (Mohd Yusof, Ramlee, Syed A. Malik & Seri Bunian, 2012). Most researchers adopted or adapted a scale from the past studies to examine undergraduate students’ perceived employability (Azmi, Hasim & Yusoff, 2018; Bakar & Hanafi, 2007; Chow et al. 2019; Kazilan, Hamzah, Bakar, 2009; Tanius & Susah, 2013).

1.3 Problem Statement

In facing future careers, undergraduate students face many challenges and inquiries; as to whether they will fit in the local and global job markets (Tomlinson 2008). The undergraduate students are in the phase of constructing their identities and examining their career prospects, hence it is important to find out their perceived employability (Al-Harathi, 2011). However, there is little recent empirical research in Malaysia to explore how university students identify and manage their employability in higher educational institutions and workforce dynamics (Tomlinson, 2008). Most researches in Malaysia focus on the perspectives of employers (Abd Rahman, Mat Jusoh, Muhammad Serji and Salleh, 2015; Ismail, 2012), employees (Juhdi, Pa’Wan, Othman and Moksni, 2010) and graduates (Mahazan, Siti Nubailah, Umami Salwa, Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi, 2015; Nik Hairi, Azmi, Rusyda, Arena, & Khairani, 2012; Ismail, 2011). Students’ self-perceived employability is also worth to be explored as it may influence their willingness to change and adapt to possible working environments (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). There is a need to address the limited empirical research on undergraduate students’ perceived employability.

Among the limited number of past researches of Malaysian undergraduate students’ employability, some employability instruments were adopted or adapted, such as the questionnaire by SCANS (1991) (Bakar & Hanafi, 2007; Kazilan, Hamzah and Bakar, 2009; Omar, Bakar and Mat Rashid, 2012), Rothwell, et al. (2008) (Chow et al., 2008) and Robinson (2006) (Ali, Long, Zainol and Mansor, 2012). There were also some employability instruments developed (Mohd Yusof, et al., 2012; Seri Bunian, et al., 2012; Tanius and Susah, 2013). All these mentioned instruments emphasize generic skills and pay little attention on students’ employability attributes although one’s attribution has been an arising component in the recent conceptualization of employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Clarke, 2017). Since the scales do not measure students’ self-perceived employability attributes in detail, it does not provide a comprehensive pattern of attributes that assist the students and those relevant to identify and work on areas that can be improved in order to increase and enhance the overall employability.

Meanwhile, there is a lacking in the reporting of the psychometric properties of the employability instrument used or developed (Bakar & Hanafi, 2007; Kazilan, Hamzah and Bakar, 2009; Omar, Bakar and Mat Rashid, 2012; Shafie and Nayan, 2010; Tanius and Susah, 2013; Wye et al., 2012). All of the questionnaires adapted and adopted were not developed according to Malaysian context. Although the researchers adapted the questionnaire to fit in Malaysian context, the validity of the questionnaire was uncertain as it was not reported. With the lacking in the evidence of psychometric validity for all these instruments, the adequacy of the questionnaires in measuring undergraduate students' perceived employability could be impugned. In addition, some employability instruments was customized to students of certain fields of study (Bakri and Mohd Puad, 2019; Mohd Yusof, et al., 2012; Seri Bunian, et al., 2012; Tanius and Susah, 2013; Wye et al., 2012). The scales may not be suitable to measure the perceived employability of students in other disciplinary areas. Hence, there is a need to develop an employability scale that suits students regardless of their background.

Despite the proliferation of employability models, a holistic view of employability from a psychological perspective remains underdeveloped. Malaysia higher education institutions were urged to incorporate the core generic competencies listed in Employability Attributes Framework (EAF) (MOHE, 2012b) in the curriculums. The framework was developed from an employers' perspective through a competence-based approach. A competence-based approach that focuses on an individual's specific and generic skills (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijde, 2006) is one of the well-known approaches to employability in psychology literature. However, based on a prominent conceptualization of employability by Yorke (2006), achievement in skills has to be added with achievement of understandings and personal attributes to gain employment and career success. Hence, there is a need to integrate another famous approach to employability, dispositional approach, which focuses on an individual's proactive attitudes towards career (Fugate and Kinicki, 2008). In addition, comparing the framework with some well-known employability models, some attributes were left out. There was also no instrument constructed based on the framework to assess university students' employability. Therefore, this study aims to expand the EAF, and develop and validate a scale based on the integrated model of employability that can perhaps provide better insights regarding undergraduate students' perceived employability.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the research is to develop item pools for the constructs of a measure of self-perceived employability for final-year undergraduate students. The specific objectives of the research are

1. to determine the concept of employability based on final-year undergraduate students' perspective.
2. to determine the construct and subconstructs of final-year undergraduate students' self-perceived employability attributes
3. to develop items for Self-Perceived Employability Instrument to measure final-year undergraduate students' employability

4. to determine the content validity of Self-Perceived Employability Instrument to measure final-year undergraduate students' employability
5. to determine the construct validity of Self-Perceived Employability Instrument to measure final-year undergraduate students' employability
6. to determine the reliability of Self-Perceived Employability Instrument to measure final-year undergraduate students' employability, and
7. to identify final-year undergraduate students' self-perceived employability based on their demographic profile.

1.5 Research Questions

This study endeavors to answer the questions below:

1. What is the concept of employability from final-year undergraduate students' perspective?
2. What are the constructs and subconstructs of self-perceived employability attributes from final-year undergraduate students' perspective?
3. Is the Self-Perceived Employability Instrument for final-year undergraduate students valid?
4. Is the Self-Perceived Employability Instrument for final-year undergraduate students reliable?
5. Based on the demographic profile, how is final-year undergraduate students' self-perceived employability?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to contribute to education field in psychology and career development areas. The concept of employability is complex as there are many stakeholders of the educational process involved, such as the students, educators, higher educational institutions, employee, employer and the policy maker. Besides being the beneficiaries of the educational process, students as well play the role of potential employees. However, students' perception of employability tends to be overlooked even though they are the recipients of employability attributes development. Hence, examining undergraduate students' perceptions would be fruitful to contribute to the conceptualization of employability from the students' perspectives. This would help educators to have a better understanding of students and plan effective teaching and learning activities.

Moreover, this study revealed undergraduate students' perceived employability which portrayed their self-perception about how ready they are to fit in the labour market after several years of university study. This is important as perception affects one's behavior, feelings, thoughts and physical conditions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When an individual thinks that he/she is employable, he/she is likely to feel secure and independent towards environmental conditions (Rothwell

& Arnold, 2007). In other words, a person who perceives himself/herself to have a high level of employability is not fear of the external factors or the change of working environment as they know that they can perform well in whatever kind of condition. This contributes to the contemporary literature on undergraduate students' subjective employability. Educators and students can be informed of the importance of subjective employability besides actual employability.

Furthermore, this study expanded EAF and produced an integrated model of perceived employability from an individual perspective, in this case, from undergraduate students' point of view. It is significant to explore whether undergraduate students as potential employees are aware of employability attributes and their perception of their future employability. The dominant approaches to employability from the psychological perspective include competence-based and dispositional approaches. Hence, in the present study, both competence-based and dispositional approaches in exploring perceived employability of undergraduate students were applied. The integrated model is more holistic by including more possible constructs in understanding undergraduate students' perceived employability in Malaysian context and it adds value to the conceptualization of employability. The integrated model may be helpful for Malaysian higher education institutions and policy makers in producing a more effective employability framework and accompanying toolkit to embed employability skills and attributes in higher education learning.

Practically, the Self-Perceived Employability Instrument developed can be used in researches that aim to measure Malaysian undergraduate students' perceived employability. The instrument developed in accordance with Malaysian context is comprehensive with different attributes of perceived employability. Such research would expand the understanding of undergraduate students' perceived employability in Malaysian context. The findings would provide a glimpse into the internal psyche that will interact with external input in influencing students' behavioural landscape. Moreover, the detailed pattern of attributes will assist undergraduate students and those relevant to identify and work on the areas to enhance the overall employability.

Further, educators or higher education institutions could use the Self-Perceived Employability Instrument for an undergraduate students' perceived employability scan. The study reported students' attributes related to employability. The results as well reflect the responsiveness of higher education institutions in their main function, which is to prepare students with expertise as well as employability skills to fit in a competitive working environment. By knowing undergraduate students' perceived employability levels in different dimensions, the universities could be more effective in the design, implementation and evaluation of teaching and learning approaches as well as employability development interventions.

1.7 Scope of Study

This study focused only on local final-year undergraduate students as the sample. This group of students is mostly not working and exposed to the working world.

The other students did not take part in this research because they still need to undergo some or a lot of courses to improve their employability. The foreign students are excluded as there might be a difference in the background and culture with Malaysian students. As for postgraduate students, they are not participating in this research because most of them are part-time students with a full-time job, or full-time students with (a) part-time job(s), which means they are more exposed to the working environment.

Furthermore, the instrument was developed based on the individual perspective of employability. This viewpoint focuses on the quality of undergraduate students, such as skills to get employed a job, and then remain in the job, and develop their potential with the job towards their career success. The instrument did not include other perspectives of employability, such as economic-social and organizational perspectives.

1.8 Limitations of Study

There were a few limitations to this study. Firstly, there were sample characteristics limitations as the sample was homogenous with only Malaysian final-year undergraduate students from private higher education institutions. Without sample diversification, the research findings would not be appropriate to be generalized (Nunnally, 1967) on undergraduate students who are not in their final year, undergraduate students in public higher education institutions and postgraduate students as well as foreign students. Secondly, this study could not conclude whether undergraduate students' perceived employability matches employers' expectations or fulfill the economic-social needs. This was because the research intended to focus merely on the individual perspective of employability, which is also the psychological perspective of employability (Vanhercke, et al., 2014).

Moreover, there were methodological limitations as this study applied non-probability sampling method, or purposive sampling. The judgmental subjective component of purposive sampling can be its disadvantage as compared to probability sampling technique, hence the representativeness of the sample would be doubted (Sharma, 2017). This limitation was addressed by choosing the students from the universities with high graduate employability rates and university ranking. The achievements of the universities indicate their success in preparing the students for the working environment, hence the students are expected to provide insights regarding employability attributes they possess. Moreover, the qualitative findings would be assessed quantitatively and compared with the existing employability models.

Besides, the study used a self-report questionnaire. The self-reporting nature of quantitative studies is claimed to increase the possibility of response bias and social desirability bias (Rosenman, Tennekoon and Hill, 2011). Response bias happens when the respondent is unsure about the instrument. Social desirability bias occurs due to the desire to project a favourable image in the survey, even

though the respondent's identity is anonymous. To address response bias, simple instructions to answer the instrument was written in the questionnaire. The researcher also explained the instructions again verbally to the respondents during data collection. The respondents were allowed to ask for clarification from the researcher when they were uncertain about any of the items as the researcher was physically available throughout the data collection process. Besides, the researcher verbally emphasized to the respondents on the anonymity of their identity and the importance of sincerity in answering the questionnaire to avoid social desirability bias. To further confirm the confidence in the self-report data, this study adopted a mixed methods approach where qualitative data was collected to strengthen the analysis of the data.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

For this study, some specific terms are used and they will be defined in this part.

1.9.1 Employability

Employability, is referred as “the potential to secure, maintain, and grow in a particular job at the workplace” (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012b). For present study, employability is perceived from individual perspective. Employability is initially referred as undergraduate students' perception of attributes that they possess which enable them to obtain employment after they graduate and undergo continuous development in their career. Students' employability was measured by the Self-Perceived Employability Measurement developed by the researcher. The term was then redefined based on the current research findings.

1.9.2 Attributes

According to Bezuidenhout (2011), employability is a psycho-social construct which represents “a combination of attributes (dispositions, values, attitudes and skills) that promote proactive adaptability in changing environments and enhance an individual's suitability employment and the likelihood of obtaining career success” (p. 78). For this study, attributes in relation to employability refers to psychological qualities such as dispositions, values, attitudes and skills.

1.9.3 Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students are college or university students who are pursuing their first bachelor's degree and aim to obtain their degree by completing a certain amount of credit hours required for the degree (Shu, 2009). For this research, undergraduate students are referred as students who are pursuing their first bachelor's degree. However, the population and the sample of this research include only the final-year undergraduate students.

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BIODATA OF STUDENT

The student, Wong Siew Ping, was born on 22nd October 1985 in Sibul, Sarawak. She had her primary and secondary education in her hometown and furthered her studies in Selangor. She obtained a Bachelor of Education, majoring in Informational Technology, in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). She then continued her study in the same university and earned a Master of Education in Educational Psychology. She is at present a student of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology in UPM. Besides being a postgraduate student, she is a lecturer in Multimedia University. She teaches social science subjects. She has passion in teaching and knowledge sharing. Other than these roles, she is a mother of one. She enjoys exploring psychological theories and applying them on her daughter. She is looking forward to graduate soon with a Doctor of Philosophy and contribute more in tertiary education.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Roslan, Samsilah and Ping, Wong Siew and Sulaiman, Tajularipin and Jalil, Habibah Ab and Siaw, Yan Li (2020) *Psychometric Properties of Graduate Employability Instrument among Malaysian Higher Education Institution Students*. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8 (1A). pp. 164-178. ISSN 2332-3205

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