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Rahman Alias, Guan Teik Ee, Agnis Sombuling, Samsiah Jayos

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Work Readiness among Final Year Students in A Higher Education in Malaysia

Rahman Alias, Guan Teik Ee, Agnis Sombuling
Universiti Malaysia Sabah Malaysia

Samsiah Jayos
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Malaysia

Abstract
This study was conducted to examine the level of work readiness among final year students at a public university in Malaysia. A total of 71 respondents participated in this study (N = 71), consisting of 22.5% (16) males and 77.5% (55) females. The level of work readiness was measured using the Work Readiness Inventory which looked at six areas of work readiness, namely Responsibility, Flexibility, Skills, Communication, Self-view and Health & safety. The results of this study showed that all of the students have high work readiness in all areas, except Self-view has a moderate work readiness. Out of the six areas of work readiness, only Self-view had a significant difference between genders, t = 2.46, k <.05, where male students have a higher level of work readiness (M = 3.20, SD= 0.62) than female students (M = 2.79, SD= 0.51). This study revealed that the university must act proactively and promptly as a nurture place to brush up students' self-efficacy, especially among female students.
Keywords: Work Readiness, Final Year Students, Higher Education, Male, Female

Introduction
It has always been a must for students at the undergraduate level who are in the final year of study to equip themselves with various needs before setting foot into the world of work. The challenge in finding a job is one that needs to be faced by students who are about to graduate. Caballero and Walker (2010) predicted that the convergence of globalization and an aging population will lead to big labor shortages. Thus, organizations compete with each other globally to obtain capable, adaptable, and multi -skilled staff or employees (Meyer et al., 1998). With the large numbers of graduates and increasing numbers from year to year, the demand for jobs is also increasing and at the same time the job offers are getting fewer causing prospective university graduates to have to compete for a place in the jobs offered. Therefore, adequate preparation in terms of physical and mental is very important and this can be seen in terms of the level of work readiness of students.

University graduates are a key resource for organizations to recruit new employees especially among large companies. The recruitment of these graduates has become an annual cycle and is a strategic policy component to human resources (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Recent studies have shown that job readiness is one of the things relevant to graduate

recruitment by employers today (Caballero & Walker, 2010). This indicates that work readiness is very important to study because undergraduate students are those who will accept employment for the first time in their life.

Most institutions of higher learning have provided various facilities for students to learn so that they can achieve good academic results but very little in looking at their readiness to enter the world of work. Based on this situation, a study on work readiness among university students is very much needed to see the extent of their readiness to work. This study is very necessary because it can help students in terms of areas of needs that they need to take into consideration before entering the world of work in the future. At the same time, the university also can help their students to be more equipped in terms of work readiness apart from the academical aspect. This will indirectly give a great impact to the country in providing human capital that can meet the value of the current and future job market because it can provide quality human capital and be able to generate returns in terms of economics. It helps in nurturing employment resources so that they are more competent globally.

Methods
This section discusses the research tool used, sampling, research procedures and analytical data used.

Instrument
The Work Readiness Inventory (WRI) has been used to measure the level of students' concern for work readiness. This tool was developed by Brady (2010) which aims to assist employees to address their work readiness characteristics so that they can meet the challenges of today's market. It has six areas of work readiness, namely Responsibility, Flexibility, Skills, Communication, Self-view and Health & Safety. There were six items for each readiness area.

Each respondent will be asked to read each item of readiness and record their level of five possible responses. The feedback options were 5= Very Concerned, 4= Concerned, 3= Somewhat Concerned, 2= A Little Concerned and 1= Not Concerned. The scoring method for this tool is to add the total score for each item given by the respondent according to the areas described. For example, items 1, 7, 13, 19, 25, and 31 are items in the Responsibility area; items 2, 8, 14, 20,26 and 32 are Flexibility area; items 3, 9, 15, 21, 27, and 33 are in the Skills area; items 4, 10,16, 22, 28, and 34 are in the Communication area; items 5, 11, 17, 23, 29, and 35 are in the Self-view area; items 6, 12, 18, 24, 30 and 36 are in the Health & Safety area. The higher the value of the score indicates the higher the level of readiness of a person for the particular area.

The interpretation of each area of concerned are based on total score range as in Table 1: 25-30 scores are Very Concerned, indicating very high work readiness on a particular area; 19-24 scores are Concerned, indicating high work readiness of a particular area; 13-18 scores are Somewhat Concerned, indicating moderate work readiness of a particular area; 7-12 scores are A Little Concerned, indicating a little work readiness of a particular work readiness of a particular area; and 6 scores are Not Concerned, indicating no work readiness of a particular area.

Table 1
Level of Concern and Toral Score Range

Level	Score Range	BTG	FLK	KMH	KOM	PDR	KST
5. Very concerned	25-30						
4. Concrned	19-24						
3. Somewhat Concerned	13-18						
2. A Little Concerned	7-12						
1. Not Concerned	6						

Notes: BTG= Responsibility, FLK=Flexsibiliti, KMH=Skills, KOM=Communicationi, PDR=Self-view, KST= Healty & Safety.

Sampling
The selection of the study sample was done randomly according to proportion in a faculty that has 5 programs. The total sample required was approximately 69 students. However, this study was able to collect 71 respondents.

Research Procedure

The instrument was translated using the back-to-back translation method. There are two sections in the questionnaire. Section A is related to the demographic information of the respondents, and Section B is Work Readiness Inventory.

Pilot test was done before data collection. Google Forms were used to collect the data. Students needed to read the instructions and explanations before answering the questionnaires. Informed consent was done through the same Google Forms too.

Data Analysis

22.0 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were used. Brady (2010) suggested that the content validity, concurrent validity, internal consistency, stability and reliability of the WRI are strong. The Cronbach's alpha for this study was .89.

Results
Below is the results for this study:

Work Readiness According to Areas
Table 2 showed the results according to areas of work readiness. For Responsibility area, 44% (31) students rated Very concerned and Concerned. While 10% (7) of all students answered that they were Somewhat Concerned, followed by 3% (2) students answered A Little Concerned, and no student chose Not Concerned. Since the level of Very Concerned and Concerned were high in the Responsibility area, indicating that students' work readiness was at a high level for this area.

As for the area of Flexibility (FLK), 11% (8) students rated Very Concerned. The majority of students, i.e. 69% (49) students have answered Concerned. 18% (13) students answered Somewhat concerned. Only 1% (1) student answered A Little Concerned. These results showed that work readiness for the Flexibility area was high.

Next is the Skills (KMH) area. Almost half of the students rated Very concerned in this area which was 51% (36) students in total. While those in the range of Concerned were 37% (26) students. At the level of Somewhat Concerned was 11% (8) students. Only 1% (1) student endorsed A Little Concerned. No one endorsed Not Concerned. As most of the students showed Very Concerned for the Skills area, indicating that their work readiness was high for Skills area.

As for Communication area, results showed that 32% (23) students chose Very Concerned. While 55% (39) students chose the level of Concern. At the level Somewhat Concerned was only 13% (9) students. None of the students chose A Little Concerned and Not Concerned. These results also reported that the work readiness for Communication area was high.

The level of Very Concern for the area of Self-view (PDR) showed only 1% (1) student endorsement. While 35% (25) student were at the level of Concerned. Somewhat Concerned was the highest, it was endorsed by 54% (38) students. The remaining 10% (7) students were at the level of A Little Concerned and none of the student endorsed Not Concerned. These findings indicated that the work readiness for the Self-view area was moderate.

Lastly the Health & Safety area. Results showed that the level of Very Concerned was endorsed by 45% (32) students. As for the level of Concern was endorsed by 39% (28) students. While the level of Somewhat Concerned was endorsed by 13% (9) students. For the level of A Little Concerned and Not Concerned were endorsed by 1% (1) student respectively. These findings also indicated that the majority of the entire sample has a high work readiness for the Health & Safety area.

Table 2
Work Readiness According to Areas

Level	Scores Range	Work Readiness (%N=71)					
		BTG	FLK	KMH	KOM	PDR	KST
5. Very concerned	25-30	44% (31)	11% (8)	51% (36)	32% (23)	1% (1)	45% (32)
4. Concrned	19-24	44% (31)	69% (49)	37% (26)	55% (39)	35% (25)	39% (28)
3. Somewhat Concerned	13-18	10% (7)	18% (13)	11% (8)	13% (9)	54% (38%)	13% (9)
2. A Little Concerned	7-12	3% (2)	1% (1)	1.% (1)	-	10% (7)	1% (1)
1.Not Concerned	6	-	-	-	-	-	1% (1)

Notes: BTG= Responsibility, FLK=Flexsibiliti, KMH=Skills, KOM=Communicationi, PDR=Self-view, KST= Healty & Safety.

Table 3 showed mean for all the areas of work readiness. The highest was Skills (M=4.03,

SD=0.73), second was Responsibility (M=3.91, SD=0.73), third was Health & Safety (M=3.91, SD=0.78), fourth was Communication (M=3.82, SD=0.59), fifth was Flexibility (M=3.51, SD= 0.52), and lastly was Self-view (M=2.88, SD=0.55).

Table 3
Mean According to Work Readiness Areas

Work Readiness Areas	Mean	SD
Responsibility	3.91	0.73
Flexibility	3.51	0.52
Skills	4.03	0.73
Communication	3.82	0.59
Self-view	2.88	0.55
Health & Safety	3.91	0.78

SD= Stabdard Deviation

Comparison of Work Readiness Levels between Genders
Based on the findings obtained in Table 4, there was no significant difference in the level of work readiness for the Responsibility area between males and females, t = -1.16, p> .05.

While for the level of work readiness on the Flexibility area, the findings also show that the level of concern for Flexibility between male and female students was not significantly difference, t = -0.85, p> .05.

At the level of work readiness for the Skills area showed no significant difference between male and female students, t = -1.41, p> .05.

As for the Communication area, also no significant difference in the level of work readiness between male and female students, t = - 0.21, p> .05.

As for the Self-view area, the findings of this study showed a significant difference in the level of readiness between male and female students, t = 2.46, p <.05.

For the Health & Safety area, the findings did not show a significant difference in the level of work readiness between male and female students, t = -1.49, p> .05.

Table 4
Comparison of work readiness between genders

Work Readiness Area	t	p
Responsibility	-1.16	0.25
Flexibility	-0.85	0.40
Skills	-1.41	0.16
Communication	-0.21	0.83
Self-view	2.46	0.02*
Health & Safety	-1.49	0.14

Table 5 showed the mean and standard deviation of each area between genders. Since the results in Table 4 showed that Self-view had a significance difference between genders, so we look at the mean for Self-view between male and female in Table 5. It was shown that male has a higher mean than female, i.e. M=3.20 (SD=.62) versus M=2.79 (SD=.51).

Table 5
Mean of Work Readiness According to Genders

	Mean -Male (SD)	**Mean -Female (SD)**
Responsibility	3.73 (0.82)	4.00 (0.70)
Flexibility	3.42 (0.66)	3.54 (0.48)
Skills	3.80 (0.97)	4.09 (0.64)
Communication	3.79 (0.61)	3.84 (0.59)
Self-view	3.20(0.62)	2.79 (0.51)
Health & Safety	3.66(0.95)	4.00 (0.72)

SD=Stadard Deviation

Discussion
The analysis showed that 44% of the students had Very Concerned and Concerned in the Responsibility area respectively means that the students are ready to take up the responsibility for work. Thus, it can be assumed that the students have the characteristics of employees defined by Brady (2010) that they will give commitment in their work, meet work quality standards and will maintain privacy and confidentiality of organizational policies where they work and can help in terms of reduction of waste and losses.

Respondents also showed a high level of concern in the Flexibility area. Flexibility is a resilience factor that allows an employee to adapt to change and accept the realities of a workplace (Brady, 2010; Moorhouse & Catabiano, 2007). This means that the respondents are able to accept and experience changes according to the current workplace situation, including changes in work schedule, duties, job title, work site, and working hours.

The Skills area was the highest level of concern among the respondents, where 51% of the respondents chose Very Concerned and another 37% chose Concerned. These skills not only involve micro skills specific to the job or profession, but also micro skills such as "learn how to learn" (Parker et al., 2008). These types of individuals know their capacities and strengths. At the same time they are willing to acquire new skills to meet job demands.

The Communication area also showed a high level of concern among the respondents. This indicates that the respondents are very concerned about the way they communicate and build social relationships in the workplace. According to Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) in their study on the exchange of social relationships in the workplace found that high work quality relationships are related not only in the execution of tasks but also to the assistance of employee supervisors and other colleagues, where a good communication took place that individual are able to follow directions, ask for help, and accept positive criticism (Brady, 2010). They can also get along with their colleagues.

While the Communication area is relating to interpersonal, Self-view area is relating to intrapersonal. A good self-view individual believe about themselves. They are aware of their adequacy and have self-confidence (Bradly, 2020). This area showed the lowest level of concern where only 1% of the students endorsed Very Concerned and another 35% of the

students endorsed Concerned, indicating that students probably have some difficulties in self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Self-confidence and self-efficacy are two important elements to help individuals confidently believe his ability to cope, adapt, and demonstrate achievement in the world of work (Betz, 2004). As the students showed the lowest scores in this area, indicating that the university needs to design programs to help students to increase their self-confidence so that they have a more positive self-view in order for them to believe that they can do even for a difficult task.

The Health & Safety area reported a high level of concern among respondents. With this it can be assumed that the respondents are able to maintain good hygiene and appearance. They also value and care about physical and mental fitness and are able to follow all safety instructions outlined in the workplace (Brady, 2010).

As for comparison between genders, the Self-view area has a significant difference between males and females. The findings indicated that male respondents (M = 3.2, SD = 0.62) have a higher level of self-view than female respondents (M= 2.79, SD = 0.51), implying that male respondents have better awareness of the ability they have. They have more self-acceptance and self-confidence. It also shows that male students have a higher self-efficacy than females. This is probably male students are braver to try new things and venture into exploration during their studies years, this in turn makes them more daring to carry out tasks that they never did before as compared to females.

Limitations and Future Direction
As this study is only a preliminary study, it only concentrated in a faculty at a public university in Malaysia, the findings cannot be generalised across the country. However, it can be a good reference for comparison within institutions in Malaysia as well as the world. Future studies that replicate our findings may include more facilities and universities so that it can be generalised. It is also recommended that future studies include more variables such as academic, and happiness in relation to work readiness as these are the possible factors that influence students' work readiness at the university level.

Practical Implications
Despite the limitations, the findings of the current study carried important implications for work readiness among final year university students, especially this study revealed that our students still lack in self-confidence. Provision given by the university seemed to be of utmost importance before graduation especially for female students. This study revealed that the university must act proactively and promptly as a nurture place to brush up students' self-efficacy.

Conclusion
The results showed that all the areas have a high level of work readiness, except for Self-view has moderate work readiness. This indicates that self-esteem of students still has some room to improve. According to Super (1990), the age of 14 to 24 years is the age range at which adolescents and early adults focus on the goal of forming (crystallizing), making determinations and implementing self-concepts in job roles. This formation (crystallizing) is the development of vocational self-concept which refers to a person's preferences for the field of employment and his level of ability. To improve students' self-views directly improve students' vocational self-concept in order for them to have a good determination of career choice. It can be helped as the result of job exploration and formation of vocational identity.

As all the respondents in this study were final year students, it is an urgent need for university to help them before they venture into the world of work. As these university students will be a main force for the nation, it is suggested once they entered universities, programs for positive self-concept and self-view need to be focused on so that they may become persons full of confidence at the end of their university years. They need to be productive and proactive in contributing energy and expertise in various fields to the country as they are the backbones of the nation.

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Corresponding Author

Guan Teik Ee
Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia.
Email: guanteikee@ums.edu.my

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