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Positive Psychological Traits and Career Adaptability among Millennials

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Abstract

Individual of the Millennial Generation are born along with technologies improvement. Consequently, it has created rapid changes in working structure as well as working environment that requires how they could continuously learn and adapt with new situation on their work future. Career adaptability is a critical variable, which convey meaning the ability to adjust oneself thus, fit with change in their career. Thus, in time with increasingly diverse, the ability to navigate and adapt with changes and challenging work are most important. Positive Psychological Traits are major predictors that been recognized as vital capacities on how these students are able to cope with turbulent changes in future work. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate Positive Psychological Traits and Career Adaptability among Millennials as well as to identify the most influential factor in Positive Psychological Traits that influence career adaptability among students at Universiti Teknologi Mara Melaka City Campus. This study used convenience sampling techniques and online questionnaire as an instrument to collect data. The data from 70% out of 329 students are collected then evaluated by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 23 Software. The result from multiple regression analysis indicates that all the elements in Positive Psychological Traits

which is resilience, optimism and hope have positive significant relationship with career adaptability. Moreover, regression analysis revealed that, resilience found to be the most influential variables towards career adaptability among these millennials at Universiti Teknologi Mara Melaka City Campus.

Keywords: *Career adaptability, Positive Psychological Traits, Resilience, Optimism, Hope.*

Introduction

With withdrawal of Baby Boomers from the workforce, greater numbers of millennial generations will be entering the employment, and shape the future workplace. In the next few years, the world of work will be filled by this generation which comprise almost 75.4 billion worldwide (Fry, 2016). Millennials are grown up along with the technologies which require them to continuously adapting to changes (Leonard & Rikleen, 2014). As a result, the future of work that this generation may enter will be uncertain and dramatically reshape tomorrow workplace (Sundarajan, 2017). Therefore, employer has demanded for the need of workforce who can adapt and response quickly to changes (Iva & Eliška, 2016). Due to urgency, career adaptability skills are required to all people especially among young generations.

Malaysia is not excluded from this transition whereas it is estimated about 9.06 million of millennial are in Malaysia and 75% of them are expected to entering global workforces by 2025 (Malaysia Untold, 2017). Nevertheless, rapid change of modernization and the highest dumping numbers of graduates has led the millennials are competing against them. Consequently, it has created the needs of workforce with the adaptability skills in the labor market demands. Therefore, career adaptability is needed in this era as this skill involves the capacity of individual to plan and adjust oneself in ever changing career plans while at the same time, to fit or respond to changing work situations (Shaibu, Mat, & Rahim Article, 2016). Hence, research into career adapt-abilities in the context of young adults is thereby valuable (Yıldız, & Dirik, 2016).

Career adaptability skills are increasingly being a phenomenon in this era. Over four years ago, it has derived many countries to develop research towards career adaptability since the development of Career Adaptability Scale on 1989 (Rudolph & Lavigne, 2016). Furthermore, today's complex and flexible working worlds has turned career adaptability into basic contemporary competence for entering and remain in the workplace. A report has found that lack of adaptability among employee had effect corporations worldwide which costs global economy of \$150 billion annually. Besides, individual who are unable to reinstruct for new skills, has caused billions of dollar in loss of productivity (PwC, 2014). Hence, this shows that the factors that could predict career adaptability and also the consequences of career adaptability need to be further examined (Tien, Wang, Chu, & Huang, 2012).

Less concern about career adaptability has created several problems which include the inability to be employed. A report by International Labor Organization (ILO) has found, unemployment among youth become a problem as it continued rise in year 2017 after a huge hit of Global Financial Crisis (GFC) which had begun in year 2007 (Mahyuddin, 2016). This is due to the fact that, only 53% of graduates were employed and half of graduate are jobless after getting their scroll (Shanmugam, 2017). In fact, it is being more worrying when a latest issue was reported from Malaysia Employee Federation (MEF) that graduates will face tougher time in looking for a job as job market

is expected to be bleak in year 2018 (Kaur, 2018). Besides, the essential of adaptability is continued when, 91% of the HR Director said that decision makers nowadays tend to recruit workforce based on the ability to deal with change and uncertainty (Management, 2014). Moreover, employers also complained that local graduates are lack of skills and character that are necessary to adapt with working environments. As a consequence, 62% of business in Malaysia has faced the problem of difficulty in procuring the right talents (Right Management Malaysia, 2016).

Hence, government has created several initiatives to promote life-long learning and trying to improve future workforce adaptability (Mahyuddin, 2016). Government has come out with 2050 National Transformation (TN50) with an eye of aspiration on youth. In parallel to improve future workforce adaptability, the fourth pillars of TN50, which is education system are going to be enhance to ensure its meets the demands for future jobs as having the right skills for the future generations is a big concern (Zainul, 2017). In addition, this initiative also is aligned with Eleventh Malaysia Plan which to build the inclusive economy, focus on well-being of people as well as the adaptability and quality of workforce (Economic Planning Unit, 2016). Therefore, as career adaptability is vital for today's work challenge, studies should be conducted in order to predict career adaptability from Positive Psychological Traits among under graduate's students.

Literature Review

Millennial

The term millennial was coined by Neil Howe and William Strauss, the authors of 1991 book *Generations: The History of America's Future: 1584 to 2069* (Bump, 2014). These generations are broadly classified as individual that are born around the mid of 1980-2000 (Kurian, 2017). Meanwhile, for the general term, millennial are the generations that reach adulthood in the 21st Century, which is also known as Generation Y that has been shaped by technology revolution.

In accordance with the movement of time, future global workforce will be mainly represented by millennial who face the challenge of acquiring new skills in a dynamic world. Amid with this push of globalization, millennial should prepare their professional and personal growth to engage in a globalized and interdependent world through new model of learning such as adaptability. It has been reported that in a recent study, 19% of millennial are disagree with the statement that they are easily adapt to changes and setback (Smith, 2015). Apart of adaptability, the Millennials also are considered as difficult issue among employer especially in employee retention (Othman, 2017). Hence, this directly proves that adaptability already gets an attention among millennials and only a few numbers of them are able to adapt well.

Moreover, throughout career pathways, millennials are expected to adapt to a series of changing roles and contexts, and the role changes and career transitions require individuals to re-evaluate their goals, personality characteristics, and characteristics of the job and the tasks, rendering flexibility, willingness to change, and career adaptabilities even more critical (Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2011).

Career Adaptability

Career can be described as process of life-long work and learning (Tien et al., 2012). On the other hand, adaptability is conceptualized as a response or effective reaction that are being

experience by someone to adapt with changing situation (Martin, 2016). Hence, the combination of these two pivotal terms which is *career* and *adaptability*, has brought to the comprehensively researched topic known as career adaptability (Yıldız, & Dirik, 2016).

Career adaptability was first been introduced 30 years ago (Zacher, 2014). It is being introduced by Donald Super and it is originated from career maturity. However, Super's then change the term from career maturity to career adaptability because maturity implies a set of "stage" which is limited to be apply to everyone, but adaptability is implies universal to any person regardless of age and suitable without any focus on maturation that can meet developmental task (Magruder, 2012).

Career adaptability was defined as a competency that an individual has in order to make a successful transition in labor market, organization of work, occupational and organizational knowledge where all of this elements could be a subject for a considerable change (Brown, 2011). Skills in career adaptability had arises recently, and become serious essential especially for millennial who are going to enter workforce soon. In addition, as career adaptability has become an attention phenomenon, the waves of career adaptability also give an impact for undergraduate's students. This is because those undergraduate's students who are looking for job after education will undergo a series of challenge in order to prepare themselves into a new way of living and adapt to job market (Hui Yee Chui, 2016).

As career adaptability nowadays has greatly get an attention, therefore, it can be proved that there are many predictors that can be used to predict career adaptability. As such, predictor of career adaptability in this study are focusing on Positive Psychological Traits which is resilience, optimism and hope (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016). However, another study has found that employability skills are associates with career adaptability (De Guzman & Choi, 2013). Furthermore, a study had mentioned that the predictor of career adaptability emerges from key career related variable which includes vocational identity, career future concern, goal orientation, perceived social support and career self-efficacy (Shaibu et al., 2016). In addition, career adaptability also can be predicted through personality traits that are been posed by someone (Norris, 2016). It has been proved that the differences in personality traits that are been pose by someone will lead to the differences in adapting career adaptability (Dursun & Argan, 2017).

Many studies have proved that career adaptability have an impact on organization. Individual with high adaptability are believed to perceived more control on workplace uncertainty as well as feel confident to overcome obstacle, reducing the impact of negative emotions and experiencing lower work related stress (Fiori, Bollmann, & Rossier, 2015). In addition, high career adaptability level also has lead individual to put a huge amount of energies and scanning environment surrounding for possible career options (Zacher, Ambiel, & Noronha, 2015). While at the same time, this competency could help individual to adapt and manage daily career demands (Zacher, 2015). A study also has supported that there is a positive association between career adaptability and intention to leave among individual. It is proved that those who have high level of adaptability in one's career tend to seek for new opportunities over time in improving their career development (Fiori et al., 2015).

Positive Psychological Traits

Positive psychology movement has emerged over the last decade (Natovich, Natovich, & Derzy, 2011). As the topic of positive psychology has get growing attention, many scholars nowadays had focusing on the definite concept of positive psychology by integrating the study of positive with negative to encompass human experience in all its complexity (Francis, 2016). Positive psychology can be defined as how well an individual function, how individual used rightful action as well as what to make individual lives improves (Ha, 2012). It allows for the presence of positive thinking in making or creating any decision and play an important role in term of career adaptability. In fact, positive psychology is essential where it tend to help individual gather skills and deal with everyday stuff of life that individual face (J, 2014). Positive Psychological Traits play an important role in term of career adaptability. Therefore, it can be concluded that, millennial who have more psychology balance have a deeper understanding about own self.

Resilience

Resilience is important as it allow individual for responsibility and autonomy whether or not when they are facing with ever challenging situation (Dressler, 2017). In other study, resilience is defined as the process that involves the combination of individual personal strength and capacities to reinforce efficient coping strategies and adaptive adjustment (Damásio, Borsa, & da Silva, 2011). Resilience and career adaptability has found to have close relationship as both assist individual to navigate in uncertain labor market as a study has shown the association are found to be statistically significant (Sidiropoulou-dimakakou, Argyropoulou, Drosos, Kaliris, & Mikedaki, 2015). Moreover, on another study that been done on undergraduate's student at one of the university at Turkey, it is also been found that resilience was positively correlated and significantly predict career adaptability (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016). Individual with high level of resilience tend to be more persist in any challenge that will be face. Hence, it enables them to stay maintain and learn to adapt well in ever changing condition (Warner & April, 2012). In addition, resilience is important in adaptation of stress. By reviewing stress from resilience model, it shifts the focus from pathology to human strength and well-being (Galloway, 2014).

Optimism

Optimism is described as the expectation of one's future positive events (Strauss, Niven, R. McClelland, & Cheung, 2015). Moreover, in the same way, it refers to people action, which greatly affected by beliefs about the probable outcomes of those actions (Atalaya, 2012). Many researchers also had agreed that optimism is linked toward the ability of individual to adapt to changes. The need to responds positively in changes through optimism is regards as a crucial mechanism as today's work environment is characterized by uncertainty and challenges (Strauss et al., 2015). Previous study had mentioned the result of concurrent validity analysis indicated that the relationship between optimism and career adaptability was positive (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016). At the same time, on another study, optimism also was found to have significant positive relationship in predicting career adaptability among high school students (Ozdemir, 2016). In fact, the positive association between optimism and career adaptability are also exist in the study that used a sample of university students in Australia (Tolentino et al., 2014). While at the same time, it has been found that there are positive

relations between optimism and career adaptability in a study that been conducted among Indonesian's fresh graduates (Rayvina, 2016). Hence, this can be conceptualized that positive psychology of optimism are found to have greater impact on career adaptability especially among millennial.

Hope

Hope is the forms of one's perception for obtaining goals, as well as motivation to reach the goals (Hirschi, 2014). On the other hand, hope also can be defined as the beliefs or expectation that something good, in which it is about something that have been desired are about to happen. Hope is considered as important in one's career especially for millennial as today current business environments are uncertain and demanded of self-directness, adaptability and resilience (Hirschi, Abessolo, & Froidevaux, 2015) Nevertheless, hope also are regarded as positive feeling which support individual to face difficulties as well as being able to succeed on anything that important in life (Santilli, Marcionetti, Rochat, Rossier, & Nota, 2017). Previously, study had resulted a positive relations between hope and career adaptability among undergraduates' students at one of the University in Indonesia. Positive emotional disposition (hope) towards career adaptability among fresh graduate students has been found achieved significant level (Rayvina, 2016). Therefore, it can be proving that positive psychology of hope tend to become essential towards career adaptability among millennial.

Research Methodology

This study is inquiring into the influence of positive psychology traits toward career adaptability among Millennials' undergraduate students. This study is a quantitative study. It incorporates a scientific research inquiry designed to study the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The research instruments comprise of self-administered questionnaires (primary source). A set of electronic questionnaire using Likert type scale (1-5) were distributed to respondents by the researcher. The Cronbach alpha values at the pre-test and actual test are above 0.7. It is found that the Cronbach's alpha value for this study is reliable. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS software (version 23.0)

The questionnaire used to measure all the variables involved in this study have been adapted from previous researchers. The survey questionnaire consisting of two components as the first component is to describe the demographic profiles while the second component of the questionnaires is comprised of Likert type scale (1-5). To measure career adaptability (Tien et al., 2012), resilience (Kwon & Kwon, 2014), optimism (Carifio & Rhodes, 2002) and hope (Sun, Ng & Wang, 2012), 24-item, 14-item, 8-item and 12-item have been adopted respectively.

The sample of target population was drawn from all final year undergraduate students from fifth semester who are categorized as Millennials, Universiti Teknologi Mara Melaka mainly in City Campus. This study is conveniently conducted and 329 respondents from two faculties are involved in the survey. Consistently with Hair et al., (2011) recommended that good sample size for statistical analysis at least 10-20 times more than variables is needed.

This study has been analyzed by using SPSS version 23. Multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the relationship between variables and test the hypotheses. Moreover, this

analysis also identified the most significant predictor that influenced career adaptability among the Millennials.

Findings and Discussions

In this section, the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable were analyzed.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Resilience	.470	.048	.511	9.887	.000
Optimism	.174	.041	.213	4.239	.000
Hope	.229	.061	.206	3.734	.000

As presented in Table 1, the first variable resilience shows a significant relationship with career adaptability ($\beta=0.470$, $p=0.000$) and this variable become the most influential factor. This finding is consistent with previous study by Buyukgoze-Kavas (2016). Resilience has found to have close relationship with career adaptability as both variables could assist individual to navigate themselves in this uncertain labor market especially in Malaysian setting. Due to stiff competition in the employment market nowadays, undergraduate students are no longer a “graduate student” but most of them can be called as “graduate talent” where they have shaped themselves during the study. Students with high resilience are more resistance toward uncertain conditions. They have practice themselves by involved in many curriculum activities, where these help them improve their competency skills. As such, adaptability, interpersonal communication, decision making, conflict resolution and self-motivation. These competency skills are demanded by the employers apart from obtaining their academic qualification. In Malaysia, as we are a developing country, not only the industries surviving to compete to attract the employee talent, undergraduate students are also competing each other to increase their employability in the labour market. Moreover, resilience has become as a critical variable needed by Millennials to face with turbulent and changing in workplace.

In addition, optimism shows a significant relationship with career adaptability ($\beta=0.174$, $p=0.000$). This finding is consistent with Ozdemir’s (2016) study. As mentioned above, optimism refers to individual behavioural which he or she beliefs there is always a probable outcomes of any behaviour. An excellent undergraduate student, be positive in any event is a must for them to keep succeed in any field they involved. Optimism is related to a person who always in positive mood in order to create a healthy lifestyle, free stress from life and successful social functioning and relationship. In addition, those who are optimist always believed any difficulty and hard moment can be handled wisely if we be positive at the very first place.

Furthermore, the respondents of this study also beliefs not only being resilience and optimistic, hope also plays a significant factor to career adaptability Rayvina (2016). It is found that, hope has a significant relationship with career adaptability ($\beta=0.229, p=0.000$). Interestingly, German philosophers, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, had identified optimism come out with two concepts which is the tendency to hope and the inclination to believe in the best of all possible worlds (Conversano et al., 2010). In fact, it is believed that, the higher the person's hope, the more confident, the individual in finding effective routes to achieve desired goals (Little, Snyder, & Wehmeyer, 2006).

Thus, the research findings of the study able to represent the Malaysian undergraduate students where most of them agreed that being resilience, optimistic and put hope in any effort will always help them to sustain the excellent performance as well as to easily adapt with changes and uncertain labour market condition, especially in Malaysia. This can be justified from a recent survey conducted in Malaysia, which reported that more than 31% of undergraduates with bachelor's degree are unemployed and majority of them are from public universities, and followed by 34% from private universities, 13% from polytechnics, and 2% from community college (Leo, 2016). Thus, absence of Positive psychological traits among Millennials' undergraduates will be the most significant factors why they failed to survive in this competitive employment market

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.788 ^a	.620	.615	.24033

According to Table 2, model summary above indicates that the r-square are at 62% variations in dependent variable (career adaptability) are explained by all three independent variables which includes resilience, optimism and hope. Hence, the other 38% variations are explained by the other independent variable that is not studied in this research.

Conclusion

This study is exploring on positive psychology traits can affect career adaptability with a focus on among undergraduates specifically the Millennials generation. The findings will provide new understanding to the field of study which support the growing literature on career adaptability. Generally, the findings of the study explained the influence of positive psychology traits toward career adaptability among undergraduate students in a public university.

Overall career adaptability positively predicted by resilience, optimism and hope. In addition, the significant findings between resilience and career adaptability, recognized as important antecedents of career adaptability and it contribute to the growing empirical evidence in study area. The findings propose that when individuals with high level of resilience, they tend to be more persist in any challenge that will be face. Hence, it enable them to stay maintain and learn to adapt well in ever changing condition.

Therefore, higher education institutions (HEIs) should focusing more on constructing competitive curriculum which give a great attention on the skills and competencies required for graduates to enter the labor market and offering marketable academic programs. Moreover, there is

a need to integrate and strengthen soft-skills training in students in HEIs should be overemphasized as closer relationship between universities and industries is crucial in order to develop the adaptable graduates.

Further, future research can also be extended by conducting a comparison study between private and public higher education institution. In addition, future researcher also can analyse other factors in order to fully understand the relationships between variables. Certainly, promoting career adaptability over research and practices can enhance the individual readiness in facing pressures or changes that will emerge on career context in the next future years.

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