

## The Employability Skills Among Vocational School Students in the Final Year of Malaysian Skills Certificate

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**Abstract:** Birth of highly-paid generation can happen through a vocational education system that emphasizes on comprehensive vocational training in addition to ample knowledge, immense skills, globally acknowledged certificate and strong employability skills. Thus, this study is done to identify the level of employability of students with disability whom already went through the training process. This study is also done to determine the difference between the level of employability skills between the gender of students as well as their specialty in their respective areas. This descriptive and quantitative study includes 60 students of Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas Vokasional Indahpura who are in their final year of studying the Malaysian Skills Certificate. One set of questionnaire is adapted from the Employability Skills Model which is used as an instrument to analyze the statistics such as the frequency, mean score, standard deviation, T-Test and One-way ANOVA by using a computer programme known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The result shows that the employability skills of the student are on the medium level. There are no coexistence differences proven between the level of employability skills with the gender of the students as well as none with the areas that they are specialized in. It is hoped that the analysis of the sample that had been used in this study will be used as guidance to improve the implementation of employability skills as well as teaching and learning process in Vocational school.

**Keyword:** Employability skills, Vocational school, Final year students, Malaysian skills certification.

In recent decades, to get into a certain job opportunity is seen as next to impossible. Employers require employees to have a certain qualification such as technical skills as well as employability skills. Workforce market will be monopolized by employees that are flexible, highly skilled in technical and have immense employability skills which include critical thinking skills, solving problem skills and analytical skills will monopolize the globalized work force and they will be the first choice of the employer (Nik *et al.*, 2012). Employee with high employability skills can go through social and economy changes without any problem (Husain *et al.*, 2010). High employability skills among students or employee can help them successfully finish their task in any condition when they are employed (Nik *et al.*, 2012).

Employability skill is the skill and quality of a certain individual that is required from an employee when the individual is employed. This skill can be transferred from one work field to the another. The employability skill does not only involve quality skill that is required in a specific work field, in fact it includes all kind of work field. Adnan *et al.* (2017) stated that employability skill is a set that includes behaviour, knowledge and skills that required among the employees to ensure their capabilities in the workplace.

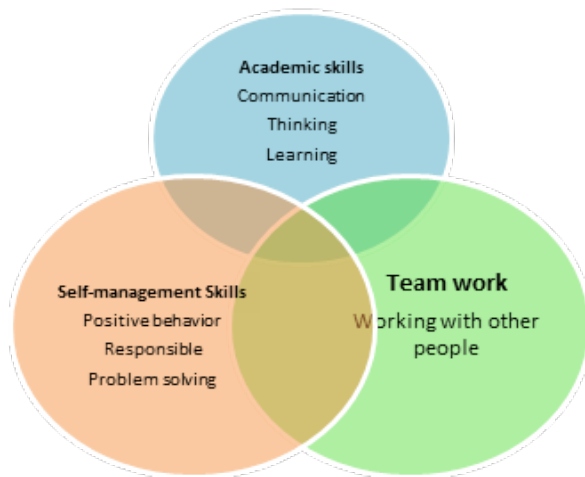
The Conference Board of Canada found that the work field demanded few specific skills from the employees to ensure them to be ready when they enter

the work field. In the profile of their work structure, they stated that employers nowadays wanted their employees to acquire three aspects of employability skills which are: a) academic skills, b) self-management skills c) team work based on figure 1.

The failure to dominate the employability skills is the main reason as to why employees with disability are having a hard time to secure a job. Most of the time, persons with disability not being in the work force are due to the lacking of self-esteem (Rahmah *et al.*, 2011; Zaliza *et al.*, 2014; Yusof *et al.*, 2012), embarrassed and shy of their disability when they are working alone, they are not willing to try new things, they are not completely skilful in their specialised areas (Rahmah *et al.*, 2011; Zaliza *et al.*, 2014) as well as having communication issue (Husain *et al.*, 2010; Yusof *et al.*, 2012).

Based on the statistics that were released by Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (JKM), as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, the total number of people with disability that is registered is 420,201 people. According to YB Dato' Sri Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development in her speech during the pre-launch of Job Fair for people with disabilities in North Zone in 2017 she stated that the percentage of employees with disabilities in the public sector is only 0.24%. Therefore, this experiment is done to determine the level of employability skills of the final year students of the Malaysian Skill Certificate in Vocational Schools.

**Figure 1. Employability Skills Model by The Conference Board of Canada**



**Table 1. Respondent’s Profile**

Profile Demography	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	42	70
Female	18	30
<b>The field that the students are majoring in</b>		
Food Preparation and Production	11	18
Hospitality Operation	26	43
Hair Styling	14	23
Aesthetic Service	9	16

**Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis for Employability skills**

Employability Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
<b>Communication Skills</b>	2.620	0.571	Medium
<b>Problem Solving Skills</b>	2.614	0.565	Medium
<b>Teamwork</b>	2.763	0.708	Medium
<b>Self-Management Skills</b>	2.879	0.624	Medium
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.709</b>	<b>0.534</b>	<b>Medium</b>

*Research Questions:* In order to achieve the objective of the research, some questions were asked by the researchers: (1) What is the level of mastery of the employability skills among the final year students of Malaysian Skill Certificate in SMPK Vokasional?; (2) What is the most dominant employability skill’s element that has been instilled by the students?; (3) Are there any significant changes in the level of employability based on the student’s gender?; (4) Are there any significant changes in the employability skills based on the aspect or subject that the students

are majoring in?

**METHOD**

This research is in the form of descriptive with the total of 60 respondents from the Johor Bahru District. The respondents are students with Learning Disability (LD) and are in their final year. The respondents are from four different courses such as Food Preparation and Production, Hospitality Operation (HO), Hair Styling and Aesthetic Services.

This research used a set of questionnaire that contains 57 items. The questionnaire is divided into 2 sections which are demographics and the element of employability skills. Section A contains 5 items focusing on the student’s demographic information. Section B is consist of 52 items of employability skills that needed to be measured which include communication skills, problem solving skills, team work and self-management skills based on employability skills models by *The Conference Board of Canada*.

5 point Likert scale is used to measure the questions. The questionnaire is adapted based on past research done by Adnan *et al.* (2017) known as *Core Abilities* Level 1, Level 2 dan Level 3 by *National Occupational Skills Standards* (NOSS) and The Department of Skills Development. The instrument of this research is examined by two expertise of employability skills and job industry. The result of the preliminary test shows that the overall result of this research recorded a high reading which reached 0.904 Alpha Cronbach.

In this study, the descriptive analysis is used for the students’ demographic information (gender, age, academic qualification and their majors), mean score and inferential analysis (ANOVA) involves manipulated variable and dependant variable. The manipulated variables are gender and the areas that the students are majoring in while the dependant variable is the employability skills. According to Zaliza *et al.* (2014), descriptive analysis refers to the act of changing data into a structure of a form to understand and asses it better.

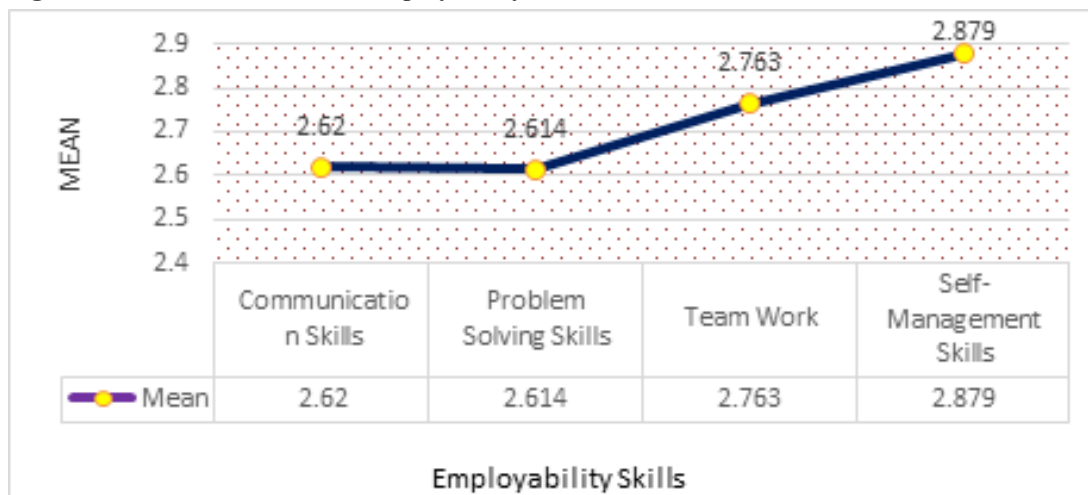
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The demography sample shows the number of respondents based on their gender and the field that the students are majoring in, table 1.

*The Level of Employability Skills of the Students.*

The first research question is to identify the level of mastery of the employability skills of the students. Table 2 shows that the analysis of four elements of employability skills that were studied, which are communication skills, problem solving skills, team work, self-management skills. Overall, the findings show that the employability skills of the students are at the medium level which is at (M=2.709, s.p=0.534).

**Figure 2. Mean distribution for employability skills**



**Table 3. The result of T-Test on the difference of employability skills between the gender**

	Male		Female		T-value	Sig.
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Standard Deviation		
<b>Employability Skills</b>	2.758	0.563	2.599	0.480	1.047	0.300

**Table 4. The ANOVA test determine the employability skills based on different courses**

4 Elements of Employability Skills	Sector that the Students are majoring in	n	Mean score	sp	df	F-value	Sig. level
Communication skills	PPM	11	2.3422	0.717	59	2.322	0.085
	HO	22	2.8128	0.535			
	DR	11	2.4652	0.568			
	PE	16	2.5257	0.339			
Problem Solving skills	PPM	11	2.5372	0.586	59	0.366	0.778
	HO	22	2.6736	0.562			
	DR	11	2.7025	0.491			
	PE	16	2.5227	0.632			
Team Work	PPM	11	2.5114	0.822	59	1.420	0.246
	HO	22	2.9886	0.638			
	DR	11	2.7500	0.820			
	PE	16	2.6328	0.601			
Self-management skills	PPM	11	2.5966	0.874	59	2.026	0.121
	HO	22	3.1136	0.577			
	DR	11	2.8182	0.604			
	PE	16	2.7930	0.403			
Overall mastery employability skills among students.	PPM	11	2.4968	0.669	59	1.668	0.184
	HO	22	2.8972	0.517			
	DR	11	2.6840	0.569			
	PE	16	2.6186	0.406			

Self-management skills of the students are at a high level ( $M=2.879$ ,  $s.p=0.624$ ). Meanwhile, problem solving skills are at low level with ( $M=2.614$ ,  $s.p=0.565$ ). The result of the study is aligned with the result of the study done by Hairi & Rashid (2013) which include the perception of the students on employability skills development which shows all the four elements at a medium level.

#### *The Dominant Elements of Employability Skills*

The second research question is to identify the dominant element skills of employability skills. Figure 2 shows the self-management skill element is at a high level and is very dominant with ( $M=2.879$ ) even though it recorded a medium reading during employability skills. This research is supported by the findings in the study done by Ramlee & Greenan (2002) which suggested that some of the factors of satisfaction of the employer with the students during their industrial training are when the employee has good self-management skills.

#### *The difference in employability skills of the students based on their gender*

The third research question in this study is to determine the different level of employability skills based on the gender. T-test is done to compare the employability skills between male and female students. The result from the T-Test is shown in table 3, no significant difference is recorded in employability skills between male ( $M=2.758$ ,  $s.p=0.563$  and female students ( $M=2.599$ ,  $s.p=0.480$ );  $t=1.407$ ,  $p=0.300$ ,  $p>0.05$ . this outcome is backed by the research done by Kandar (2014). The product of this experiment shows that there is no significant difference in the employability skills in between Male (Mean= $4.05$ ,  $s.p=0.36$ ) and Female ( $M=4.02$ ,  $s.p=0.33$ );  $t=163$ ,  $p=0.62$ . this result indicates that Male and Female student is on the same level of employability skills. The level of employability skills in different courses show in table 4.

## **SUGGESTION**

To answer the fourth research question, the researchers analyzed and used the One-way ANOVA analysis to determine the different level of employability skills among the students in their specialized courses. The manipulated variable includes 4 courses which are preparation and manufacture of food, Hospitality Operation, Hair Styling and Aesthetic Service. The One-way ANOVA result shows that no significant difference between employability skills with different courses because the significant value that was obtained is larger than 0.05 which is  $1.84 > 0.05$ . The findings of this research are parallel to the research done by

Hana & Yusnita (2015) which shows that there is no significant difference between the employability skills with their courses (Public Technology Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Technology Engineering and Mechanical Engineering Technology) because the significant value obtained is larger than 0.05 which is  $0.00 > 0.05$ . Therefore, the result shows that no significant difference in employability skills among students who are taking different courses in vocational school.

Based on the discussion, it is concluded that the employability skills of the students that are in their final year of Malaysian Skills Certificate in Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Vokasional overall are on the medium level. However, there are plenty of steps that have been taken to ensure all students in Vocational School are ready to face their challenges in the work field. These days, the students need to enrich themselves with employability skills to ensure that they can fill the vacancy in the work field and meet all the requirements. Therefore, school authorities should stress the importance of the employability skills in accordance with the recent time whereby technologies are changing in the work field and require workers to be much more effective and quick thinking. The school authorities along with the industry should continuously hold seminars or talks to ensure that teachers' knowledge on the industrial training will be up to the industry's standard. The teachers should stress the importance of the employability skills to students by using various approaches of teaching and learning methods. The teachers should have knowledge on the recent issues of employability requirements in the work field and share them with the students. There should be a collaboration in the industrial training with the school such as giving sponsorships or employing the students from various field. Government and the industry should work together to make the industrial training a fundamental thing for students in vocational schools by providing sponsorships or employing them. This will simultaneously strengthen the relationship between school and the industry. Moreover, the feedback from the employers from the industry on the school's graduates should be featured so that schools can improve their weaknesses and strengthen the training system in the near future. Moreover, the experience of working during industrial training should be enforced on students before entering the real workforce. Industrial training should be a fundamental and necessary requirement for graduates to increase the employability skills among the graduates. Thus, the Government should give empowerment to the Special Education Department to ensure that the objective will be obtained. Thus, the Special Education Department should give empowerment so that the industrial training should be carried out in special schools.

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