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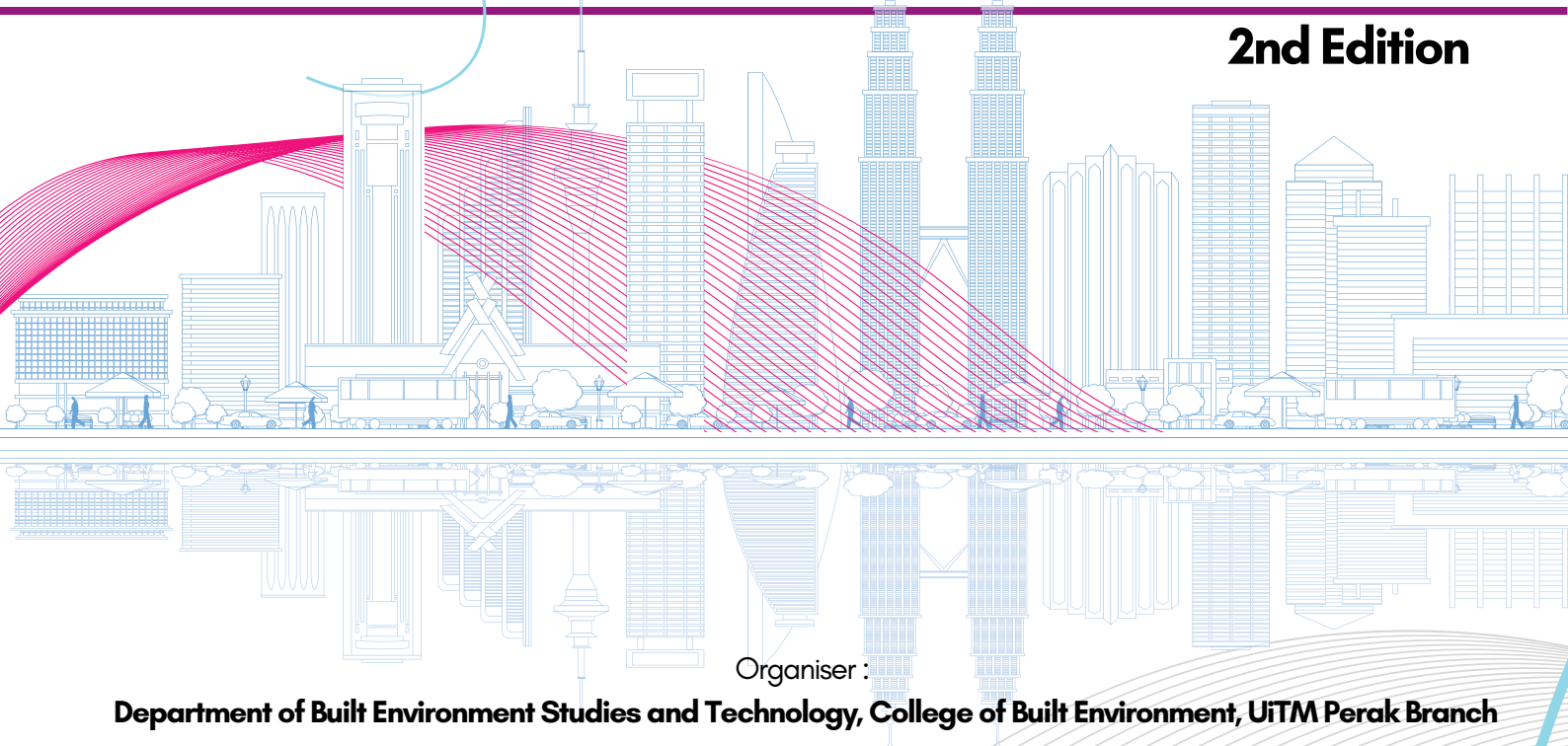
Cawangan Perak

e - Proceedings



Proceeding for International Undergraduates Get Together 2024 (IUGeT 2024)
"Undergraduates' Digital Engagement Towards Global Ingenuity"

2nd Edition



Organiser :

Department of Built Environment Studies and Technology, College of Built Environment, UiTM Perak Branch

Co-organiser :

INSPIRED 2024. Office of Research, Industrial Linkages, Community & Alumni (PJIMA), UiTM Perak Branch

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Publication date :

November 2024

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing in Publication Data

No e- ISBN: 978-967-2776-42-0

Cover Design: Muhammad Anas Othman

Typesetting : Arial

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EMPLOYABILITY OF FRESH GRADUATES AS SKILLED LABOUR IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AT PERAK TENGAH

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Abstract

Labour shortage in Malaysia is becoming critical, especially for fresh graduates. The unemployment of fresh graduates seeking to work as skilled labour in the construction industry has been a topic of discussion and debate over the past few years. There is a search for ideal solutions to overcome this issue. Some studies claim that the main reason for the unemployment of fresh graduates is the influx and domination of foreign labour. This study aims to find out possible factors that impact the employability of fresh graduates in the construction industry. A qualitative approach, involving a semi-structured interview, was selected. Six participants were chosen from the professional government sector, including assistant engineers, among others. From this study, three factors were identified- fresh graduates have issues with soft skill competencies; the foreign labour force dominates the construction industry, leading to discouragement for fresh graduates to work as skilled labour; and labour benefits are limited, discouraging fresh graduates from pursuing skilled labour positions. Some factors need to change for several reasons. For instance, fresh graduates have many options, and the government offers lower allowances than private companies. Lastly, some factors need to be removed due to various reasons. These factors include the poor image of working in construction, the need to improve the working environment in the construction industry, and the lack of safety and security in the construction sector.

Keywords: *Construction, fresh graduates, foreign labour, skilled.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Kadir (2020), the construction industry plays an essential role in contributing to development including infrastructures, residential, and commercial, creating a huge demand in the workforce. Nevertheless, the abundance of unemployment among fresh graduates, especially diploma graduates, is still alarming. Even though many job vacancies are open for everyone, especially for diploma fresh graduates, there are some problems that need to be addressed first. However, according to Mahmood (2021), a study revealed another factor that discourages fresh diploma graduates is the jobs, especially skilled jobs dominated by foreign workers. This study aims to attract the interest of fresh graduates to involve skilled labour and provide the high-quality skilled labourer to the construction industry. The study employed a qualitative method, conducting semi-structured interviews at government agencies to collect relevant data, such as barriers of employability among fresh graduates to work as skilled labour in the construction industry. It also proposes several factors to encourage fresh graduates employability in skilled labour roles within the industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Salleh (2020) mentioned that a skilled labourer could be described as a person who has skill or knowledge from recognized tertiary level institutions and use his/ her skills with good application and give benefits to others. There are several barriers of employability among fresh graduates to involve as skilled labour including being choosy to work in the office/ environment, soft skill competencies issue, the dominance of foreign labour in the industry (Valithern, 2020), low wages (Mohd Fateh et al., 2022), poor image when working in construction industry (Mahmood et al., 2021), poor working environment (Mohd Fateh et al., 2022), lack of safety and security (Mahmood et al., 2021), and lack of labour's benefits (Zulkarnain et al., n.d.).

These studies also propose several factors to encourage fresh graduate employability to involve skilled labour such as vocational education and training (Valithern, 2020), improve working environment (Mohd Fateh et al., 2022), incentives and rewards, governance and policies, as well as implementation of industrial building system (Mohd Fateh et al., 2022). Overall, in the first part of data collection, only four barriers were accepted and four needed modifications. Meanwhile the second part only needs modification, and the four factors were accepted.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study approaches a qualitative method, involving semi-structured interviews. The rationale of this approach is to get comprehensive opinions and perspectives on variables in the study. Six participants are involved where the participants had met some requirements which is a degree holder, must possess five years of working experience and must be more than 30 years old. For this study, only government agencies were involved including Construction Industry Development Board, Public Works Department and Majlis Daerah Perak Tengah.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Barrier Employability Of Fresh Graduates To Involve As Skilled Labour In The Construction Industry.

- B1 - Choosy to Work in The Office/ Environment
- B2 - Soft Skill Competencies Issue
- B3 - The Dominance of Foreign Labour in the industry.
- B4 - Low Wages
- B5 - Poor Image When Working in Construction.
- B6 - Poor Working Environment.
- B7 - Lack of Safety and Security.
- B8 - Lack of Labour's Benefits

Table 1: Results of the data collection on barriers to the employability of fresh graduates as skilled labour in the construction industry.

Barrier	IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	IV5	IV6
B1	Need modification	✓	Need modification	✓	✗	✓
B2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B4	✓	✗	✗	✗	Need modification	Need modification
B5	Need modification	Need modification	✗	✗	✓	Need modification
B6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B7	✗	Need modification	✓	✓	Need modification	✗
B8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

From the results shown in Table 1, there are four barriers that are accepted and four barriers that need modification. From B1 the participants suggested that fresh graduate have many options to ensure positive future experiences in the workforce. Statement B4 needs modification to the government offering lower allowance than Private Companies as they mentioned that there is a gap in allowances between government and private companies. B5 needs modification to the limited career opportunity. Participants informed that construction is project-based work. This could lead into uncertainty in career paths as employees move from project to project without clear progression. Lastly, B7 also needs modification to inconsistency of enforcement on safety and security due to negligence management practices, creating uncertainty and unsafe conditions for workers.

Six interviewees agreed on B2, such as problem-solving, teamwork, and good communication skills (Joanna, 2021). Even though fresh graduates technically possess theoretical knowledge, they lack practical experience since they have not worked in real settings. For B3, interviewees agreed on B3 because the construction industry failed to attract new young local labourers due to changing governmental practices, the market environment, and the economic growth of source countries especially in Malaysia (Peng, 2023.). All interviewees agreed on B6 because construction work is extremely demanding and often has tight schedules. This high-pressure environment may increase stress levels, causing employees to express their dissatisfaction with curse words and violent language. At last, six interviewees agreed on B8 because the employers were often offered less generous paid time off, including paid vacation, sick leave, and family leave benefits due to strict deadlines.

3.2 The Factors to Encourage Of Fresh Graduate Employability To Involve As Skilled Labour In The Construction Industry

- F1 - Vocational Education and Training.
- F2 - Improve Working Environment

- F3 - Incentives and Rewards
- F4 - Governance and Policies
- F5 - Implementation of Industrial Building System

Table 2: Results of the data collection on the factors to encourage of fresh graduate employability to involve as skilled labour in the construction industry

Factor	IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	IV5	IV6
F1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F2	✓	✓	Need modification	✗	✓	Need modification
F3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2 indicates the factors needed to encourage fresh graduate employability to involve skilled labour in the construction industry. Six interviewees mostly agreed with the all the factors except F2, improving the working environment. They said that improving working environment is not relevant. Instead, job security and stability should be prioritised, as these factors have a long-term impact on fresh graduates. Plus, the employer can offer permanent or long-term employment contracts which provides employees with a sense of job security and stability.

For F1, they agreed because claimed vocational training offers comprehensive training that equipped necessary practical skills that matched industry needs and standards. For F3, they agreed since they believe employers should increase their offers, such as health insurance, dental and vision coverage, retirement plans, and paid time off, making the positions more appealing for fresh graduates. Six interviewees agreed on F4 because the government can provide financial incentives or subsidies for construction companies that hire fresh graduates. At last, six interviewees agreed on F5 because IBS is able to improve the employability of fresh graduates in Perak Tengah since IBS in Malaysia has been rapidly growing over the last 15 years.

4. CONCLUSION

To sum up, several barriers discourage fresh graduates from participating as skilled labour in the construction industry. However, the significant barrier of this matter is the dominance of foreign labour in the construction industry because foreign labourers accept lower salaries and are willing to work in tougher conditions and environments. Insufficient soft skills development, job stability and security, and limited labour benefits are also barriers that need to be considered. These barriers need to be overcome because it possibly triggers the implications such as low-productivity, project delay and overrun. For recommendation, higher educational institutions need to encourage hands-on and practical learning through industrial training and internships for students. The government shall implement a minimum wage policy for fresh graduates, promoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) openly and widely. Lastly, employers should provide mentorship to help fresh graduates obtain essential work experiences in the construction industry.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

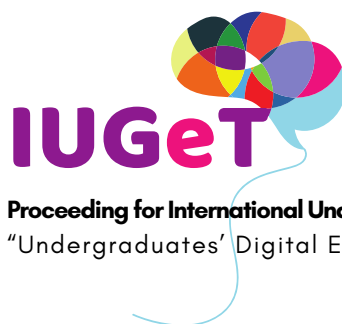
A special thank you to Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) and our supervisor who guided and helped us with the progression of the study. We also wish to express our deepest gratitude to the participants who volunteered in this study. Not to forget the other writers of this paper who had contributed their ideas and cooperation to make this study possible. Thank you.

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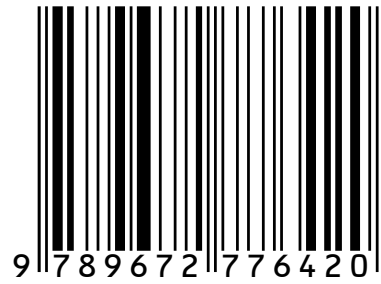
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e ISBN 978-967-2776-42-0



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