

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXAMINING GRADUATENESS:
THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL
CAPITAL, PROACTIVE CAREER
MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOURS &
WORK READINESS IN SELECTED
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

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ABSTRACT

In this competitive world, graduates have to equip themselves with proper skills and knowledge to acquire jobs. Despite unemployment rate kept rising, getting a degree from higher education institutions has become necessary for any individual to get a decent placement in the workforce as soon as they graduated. In Malaysia particularly, both employers and prospect employees confronted with several challenges, and one of them is the lack of graduateness skills and attributes. In response to this issue, this study focuses on the relationship between psychological capital (PsyCap) and proactive career management behaviour (PCMB) towards graduateness among first-degree student from selected public universities in Klang Valley. This study has also assessed the mediating effect of work readiness with regard to the relationship between psychological capital (PsyCap), proactive career management behaviour (PCMB) and graduateness where the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was employed as the research framework. A cross-sectional quantitative research approach was followed, and a non-probability purposive sample ($N = 318$) of final-year first-degree students in selected public universities in Klang Valley completed a set of questionnaires, measuring their response to related variables. The research model was further analysed using the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique. The findings of three research objectives of this study have been derived as follows: 1) psychological capital (PsyCap), proactive career management behaviour (PCMB) significantly influenced the graduateness of first-degree students in selected public universities in Malaysia; 2) work readiness as a mediating variable, have significantly mediated the relationship between psychological capital (PsyCap), proactive career management behaviour (PCMB) and graduateness, and 3) career planning was concluded to be the most influential dimension of PCMB than consultation behaviour and networking behaviour in this study. This thesis contributes the relevant empirical evidence which indicates that psychological capital (PsyCap) and proactive career management behaviour (PCMB) mediated by work readiness do play significant role in influencing the graduateness of final-year first-degree students from selected public universities in Klang Valley. The results from this research hopes to obtain greater insights into the applicability of SCCT in future research on this unique topic and help the government as well as industry practitioners to find ways to enhance graduateness of students from higher learning educations particularly in Malaysia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Chapter Overview	1
1.2 Background of Study	1
1.3 Problem Statement	9
1.4 Research Gaps	13
1.5 Research Objectives	14
1.6 Research Question	14
1.7 Significance of Study	15
1.7.1 To the Government	15
1.7.2 To the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)	15
1.7.3 To the Higher Education Institutions	16
1.7.4 To Graduates	16
1.7.5 To the Body of Knowledge	17
1.8 Scope of Research	17
1.9 Definition of Terms	18
1.9.1 Graduateness	18
1.9.2 Psychological Capital (PsyCap)	19
1.9.3 Proactive Career Management Behaviour (PCMB)	20
1.9.4 Work Readiness	20
1.9.5 Social Cognitive Career Theory	21

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This study focuses on the influence of psychological capital (PsyCap) and proactive career management behaviour (PCMB) on gradueness which is mediated by work readiness among final-year first-degree students. The purpose of this research is to present the foundational aspect of the research, beginning with the background of study, problem statement and research gaps. Three research objectives and research questions identified. This followed by the significance of the study, scope of research, definition of terms and finally, the thesis outline.

1.2 Background of Study

In an innovation-driven economy, the employability of fresh graduates is vital. This is because most jobs meant for people have been replaced by machines and robots. Thus, unemployment among graduates has been considered a challenge in most developing countries around the world. Not to mention, recent universities graduates face numerous obstacles in the form of a difficult transition from school to the professional world. As a result of these shifts, questions are being raised about the preparedness of today's graduates, who are expected to take charge of their own careers and to have the flexibility to apply their skills in a variety of setting and professions (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). In most cases, the challenges appear to stem from the massive 'production' of graduates with little focus on skills and knowledge required by the industries and employers (Winterton & Turner, 2019). This provides a significant impact on graduating students who are encountering unemployment upon their graduation.

People have been discussing the problem] of high unemployment rates among fresh university graduates since many years ago. The proportion of fresh university graduates that are remain jobless six months following graduation is causing significant concern, particularly in Malaysia. From the annual report published by Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022), the unemployment rate in November 2021