

Future Career Anxiety and Indecision of Hospitality Students in UiTM Pulau Pinang Branch Amid Covid-19 Pandemic

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)
2024, Vol. 16 (1) pp 1061-1078
© The Author(s) 2024
Reprints and permission:
UiTM Press
Submit date: 15th August 2023
Accept date: 13th Sept 2023
Publish date: 30th April 2024

Fatin Nadhirah Zulfakar
Joesri Mohamad Saber*
Mohd Zoofadli Ibrahim
Azlan Salim
Mastura Abdul Ghani
Johanudin Lahap@Wahab

Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang, Permatang Pauh
Joesr630@uitm.edu.my

Proposed citation:

Zulfakar, F. N., Saber, J. M., Ibrahim, M. Z., Salim, A., Ghani, M. A., & Lahap, J. (2024). Future Career Anxiety and Indecision of Hospitality Students in UiTM Pulau Pinang Branch Amid Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 16(1), 1061-1078.

Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 had been a significant concern to hospitality students that creates anxiety regarding their careers. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of future career anxiety on indecision among students amid COVID-19. This study proposed a framework linking future career anxiety and indecision. A total of 170 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UiTM Pulau Pinang Branch, representing a response rate of 77.3%, participated in this study. The method used is the quantitative method, and the data for all the study variables were collected through online survey questionnaires. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis. The empirical result of this study reveals a positive influence between future career anxiety and indecision among students amid COVID-19. The students experienced substantial career anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic and reported being highly indecisive about choosing a career. The study's theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for future research were also discussed.

Keywords:

Future Career Anxiety, Indecision, Potential Economic Recession, Fierce Competition, Salary, Increasing Unemployment, Job Interest

1 Introduction

Malaysia's hotel business has grown significantly in recent years, in line with the worldwide hospitality industry's growth. Tourism Malaysia's (2020) data shows that hotel rooms increased from 168,840 in 2009 to 308,210 in 2018, a more than 80% rise. In contrast, the number of hotel guests increased by less than 35% to 82.44 million in 2018. The growth of Malaysia's hospitality industry has also benefited employment, with 2.5 million jobs in 2011 and rapidly increasing to 3.56 million jobs in 2019, making this industry one of the most significant employment sectors in the country, making up just under a quarter of total employment (Hirschmann, 2020).

Hospitality colleges have developed nationwide in tandem with Malaysia's hotel business growth. This has enabled students to pursue careers in this field. The Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM is Malaysia's top public institution in the Hospitality and Leisure field, ranking 31 (Top 50) in the QS World University Rankings 2020 by Subject (Hospitality and Leisure) (Top Universities, 2020; Travel Industry Network Media, 2021). The Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM was founded in 1967 to expand the number of qualified personnel. This fulfilled the increased demand in Malaysia's hospitality, food preparation, and tourism industries. This faculty is Malaysia's first hospitality-based faculty, offering opportunities to everyone interested in higher education in the hospitality sector.

Employers often look to university students to fill professional and managerial positions (Ng & Burke, 2006). However, the hospitality, tourism, and leisure sectors need to hire graduates due to COVID-19 (Lane, 2020). Students, particularly recently graduated students, are distressed because they cannot launch their careers (Sundarasan et al., 2020). Students pursuing careers in hospitality and tourism are most concerned about this condition (Sheng, 2020), as it poses the greatest threat to their career planning (Mahmud et al., 2020). Mahmud et al. (2020) also stated that the pandemic had resulted in an uncertain future job market, shattering the hope of university students preparing for the near future job market. It instils fear in university students about finding and keeping jobs, which results in career-related anxiety. COVID- 19 has jeopardized future career planning, so students need help making career decisions (Mahmud et al., 2020).

According to Daniels, Stewart, Stupnisky, Perry, & Lo Verso (2011), people who have career indecision always suffer from career-related anxiety. Mahmud et al. (2020) stated that anxiety is a condition of mental tension and concern about the future. Anxiety can also be a factor for students who report being genuinely undecided or unable to choose a career consistently (Daniels et al., 2011). Consequently, they later develop professional hesitation, preventing them from choosing an occupation. Research demonstrates that career-related decisions such as unemployment, job searching, and others can all cause renewed indecision. In this context, the impending recession caused by COVID- 19, as financial analysts have warned, has created an unprecedented mental strain on university students, who are now forced to consider their futures (Lee et al., 2020). This circumstance exacerbates hesitation among

university students and creates a barrier to overcome later in life, particularly during this pandemic crisis.

Malaysian Hotel Association (MAH) CEO Yap Ling Seng said up to 30% of Malaysian hotels would be temporarily or permanently closed (Nortajuddin, 2020). With the current situation, hospitality and tourism students are worried as the COVID-19 outbreak has significantly impacted the industry (Sheng, 2020). Hospitality students, especially undergraduates, face deep fear and confusion as many people in the field, especially seniors in the industry, lose their jobs. They were anxious about future employment prospects after seeing massive layoffs and retrenchments in their sector.

Numerous research studies have been undertaken on professional anxiety and indecision to date, but most focus on generic conditions. Therefore, this study aims to collect current data and feedback. It examines future career anxiety's impact on decision-making, mainly for hospitality students. This study empirically assesses the current COVID-19 situation and focuses on the relationship between future career anxiety and undergraduate hospitality students' indecision.

This study discusses hospitality industry issues during COVID-19, focusing more on hospitality students who are also affected. More precisely, hospitality students' future career anxiety and indecision during COVID-19 are examined. Hence, the study examines how future career anxiety influences indecision among COVID-19 students.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Development

The theoretical development of the relationship between future career anxiety and indecision among students is rooted in several psychological theories. One such theory is cognitive career theory, which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in career decision-making (Anthony et al., 2023). According to this theory, individuals' beliefs about their abilities to succeed in a particular career path can influence their decision-making process. When students experience future career anxiety, it can undermine their self-efficacy and lead to indecision about their career paths. In the context of career decision-making, this theory suggests that the job market influences students' anxiety about their future careers, their own skills and abilities, and other factors that may impact their career prospects.

2.2 Future Career Anxiety

According to the American Anxiety and Depression Association, anxiety is a reaction to stress caused by a threat in a situation. Hwayan (2020) stated that future anxiety means a state of uncertainty, anxiety, and tension that arises from thinking about undesired changes in the future. The human emotional system develops anxiety in the presence of fear and uncertainty about the future (Mahmud et al., 2020). Every situation in a community affects the future in some way. Career uncertainty creates

anxiety and can lead to anxiety about the future, resulting from unfortunate events that confuse (Hwayan, 2020). As a result, uncertainties caused by anxiety about future careers can often compromise a person's current quality of life (Mostert & Botha, 2013). Lee et al. (2020) and Taylor (2019) also stated in their study that there are signs of fear and anxiety during a pandemic or outbreak of an infectious disease.

Due to the fear of the COVID-19 outbreak, potential workers are becoming anxious and stressed about their future careers because they do not know what will happen. Additional evidence suggests that during the global pandemic, career-related anxiety has momentum, particularly among forthcoming university graduates who will face the job market soon (Mahmud et al., 2020). Hospitality students, especially final-year students, are understandably experiencing much fear about their job prospects when they graduate during the Coronavirus pandemic (Lane, 2020). Students' level of expectations for a future decline due to an unexpected global epidemic, a threat to their future career planning (Tsai et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Elmer, Mephram, and Stadfeld (2020), worries about upcoming occupations as one of the COVID-19 stressors contributed to anxiety levels. Additionally, Chi et al. (2020) found that PTSD, anxiety symptoms, and depression were prevalent among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3 Potential Economic Recession

According to Mahmud et al. (2020), industries and economies around the world are facing tremendous hurdles to survive. According to prior studies, economic concern forms in people's minds during uncertain situations, resulting in a variety of mental or emotional diseases, including anxiety (Yetgin & Benligiray, 2019). In their study, Lee et al. (2020) discovered that the impending recession caused by COVID-19 puts an entirely different type of mental strain on existing and potential workers, putting people under pressure regarding their future.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that the upcoming economic recession will break records set by the Great Depression of the 1930s, as many countries face a multi-level crisis as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, including a health shock, domestic business disruptions, a drop in foreign demand, reversals in capital flows, and collapsing prices for the inconvenience of the COVID-19 pandemic (BBC, 2020; Perez, 2020; Martin & Bloomberg, 2020). Kaur (2020) further mentioned that historically, economic downturns have been linked to mental health issues and suicides.

2.4 Fierce Competition

The COVID-19 pandemic is also affecting employment demand in the market. In their study, Mahmud et al. (2020) state that the outbreak of COVID-19 makes the future workforce anxious about the harsh competition in the labour market. Associate Prof Dr Osman Ibrahim, director of the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Career Centre, also emphasized that students must market themselves well during job interviews because they compete with other fresh graduates and job seekers with

experience (Musa, 2020). According to Phua (2020), LinkedIn's employment market research stated that job postings in most industries have decreased considerably (Phua, 2020). This is consistent with OECD (2020) findings, which claimed that industries that had to close owing to government-imposed social distancing rules have drastically reduced their posted positions on the internet, particularly in the Leisure and Hospitality sectors. The situation has deteriorated, with the number of vacancies in these industries plummeting from 60% to 80%. Other research shows that graduate recruitment is down across the board during COVID-19 (Institute of Student Employers, 2020). Many organizations choose to postpone or limit the number of graduates they recruit, resulting in a significant decrease in the overall number of positions accessible to graduates on the formal labour market, causing a high level of competition among graduates to locate acceptable jobs. As a result, it creates anxiety among students.

2.5 Salary

Employers of all sizes are decreasing pay and hourly rates to offset income losses caused by the COVID-19 outbreak (Miller, 2020). Employees' pay was withdrawn due to numerous businesses being out of business and struggling to survive during the pandemic. Companies in all industries have no choice but to deduct employee salaries and remuneration to stay in business. This is due to the COVID-19 outbreak and Movement Control Order (MCO). As a result, most employees express fear and anxiety about their financial situation. According to a Think City survey, persons with withheld incomes struggle more than unemployed persons (Zahiid, 2020). Students, as well as working people, are concerned about the situation. Based on previous research by Islam, Barna, Khan, and Hossain (2020), their research findings indicate that anxiety and depression symptoms have been rising among university students primarily due to economic instability when students lived with families during the COVID-19 pandemic. It upset them when they saw their families struggle financially due to parental pay deductions.

2.6 Increasing Unemployment

The pandemic has also significantly affected the unemployment rate. Many industries lay off workers while others thrive. According to Coibion, Gorodnichenko, and Weber's (2020) research on labour markets during the COVID-19 crisis, hundreds of thousands of individuals lost their jobs by being fired or having their services terminated, which is consistent with a study by Lee et al. (2020). In Malaysia, the Department of Statistics Malaysia reported that the jobless rate reached 5.3 per cent in May 2020. This was the highest in three decades. The number of unemployed persons increased by 306,300, reaching 826,100. (Arumugam, 2020; Surendran, 2021). According to Kaur (2020), losing a job has a negative impact on one's mental health, resulting in a variety of emotions, such as despair and anxiety. According to the latest research, the COVID-19 epidemic resulted in enormous job losses, significantly hurting mental well-being (Posel et al., 2021). Hundreds of thousands of people have already been laid off, and many more are feeling the effects of COVID-19 (Lee et al., 2020;

Coibion et al. 2020; Charles & Anderson-Nathe, 2020). In response to Mahmud et al. (2020), the uncertainty-like scenario has been exacerbated by social media and other non-traditional media reporting on job loss. In contrast to other studies, long-term unemployment and financial insecurity are the critical stresses causing sadness and anxiety among university students (Islam et al., 2020). Uncertainty about future employment, as well as a lack of secure employment, contribute to increased stress, anxiety, despair, and burnout Kim and von dem Knesebeck (2015).

2.7 Job Interest

The study indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant detrimental impact on students' present labour market engagement and expectations for job prospects following college, according to Aucejo, French, Araya, and Zafar (2020). Students anticipated a decrease in their prospects of finding work following graduation (Aucejo et al., 2020). This has negatively affected student job interest. According to a study conducted by the research group The Centre, students had the most damaging mental well-being, anxiety, and stress, citing a lack of employment opportunities as one of their main concerns as fresh graduates during a period of economic uncertainty, as well as losing interest in finding jobs (Azuddin & Zakaria, 2020).

2.8 Indecision

Cambridge defines indecision as the inability to decide. According to Peng et al. (2012), indecision is a complicated and multi-dimensional problem involving an undecided condition and an indecisive trait. As a result, career hesitation refers to hesitation about one's job interest or vocational route. Previous research has claimed that knowing the aspects associated with career decision-making, such as interest (Fan et al., 2012), self-concept (Kathryn, 2012), professional beliefs (Ecke, 2007), and anxiety, is essential (Ozen et al., 2010). Most academics think there is a substantial link between stress and indecision (Peng et al., 2012). According to Daniels et al. (2011), professional indecision is a typical developmental state when a person evaluates various career possibilities and struggles to decide which one to follow. Almost half of college students report feeling indecisive. This study yielded a similar outcome to Seker (2020), indicating that the problematic conditions surrounding them can render it challenging to reach decisions about their future. Someone's failure to deal with specific experiences causes a gloomy outlook on the future, making it challenging to formulate decisions (Hwayan, 2020). This setting devastates students' capacity to make professional decisions (Daniels et al., 2011). As a result of COVID-19's unclear condition, potential workforce worry has developed career anxiety, and they cannot provide any beneficial decisions regarding the future (Mahmud et al., 2020). They also stated that future workers experience career-related anxiety due to their concern about finding and keeping jobs. The young are at a crossroads in navigating critical life decisions in the face of external influences. It is now riddled with difficulties that cause worry. Keskin (2021) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic impacts senior undergraduate students' careers in one of his findings. Other Institute of Student

Employers (2020) results suggest that during COVID-19, students lose knowledge about graduate transitions, impeding decision-making.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research is a descriptive study examining whether future career anxiety influences indecision among students amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Many types of research have been conducted on this topic, but mainly on general situations. As no such studies have been conducted in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak, this study hopes to extend existing research further to collect the latest feedback and data related to the heightened crisis nowadays.

For data collection, this study is constructed using the quantitative method through a cross-sectional approach. Social media platforms were used to disseminate the online questionnaire survey owing to new standard practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the current situation, an online survey is the best method. The current research focuses on the influence of future career anxiety towards indecision among undergraduate students amid COVID-19. The dimensions that will be measured are potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, increasing unemployment, and job interest.

3.2 Sampling Design

The sample population for this study will be undergraduate students of the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM Pulau Pinang, Permatang Pauh campus. UiTM is selected as the target population because UiTM has more hospitality graduates than other public universities in Malaysia (Travel Industry Network Media, 2021). To meet the objective of this research, the sample of the study will be current final-year undergraduate students consisting of students from semester five and semester six of all degree programs under the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management who will face the job market in less than a year.

The sample size of this study is determined by the table of sample sizes from Krejcie & Morgan (1970). The sample size table predicted 140 sample sizes as the population of final year undergraduate students at the University of Pulau Pinang, Permatang Pauh campus is 220. This report was given by the Coordinator of Degree students at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. Hence, a total of 140 students, which is equivalent to 60% of the population, will suffice to answer the research questions. Therefore, this study will use convenience sampling techniques under non-probability sampling for sample selection.

3.3 Instrument Development

This research will use a questionnaire conducted through an online survey among the targeted population. To measure future career anxiety, this study will adapt the measurement items from previous research related to the career anxiety scale by Mahmud et al. (2020). Meanwhile, for measuring indecision, the CDDQ (Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire), which is a convergence of CDS (Career Decision Scale), will be applied in this study. Hence, the questionnaires were created with these two combinations and minimal changes to the existing questionnaires. With regards to the instruments, the survey questionnaires are divided into three sections, starting with the demographic profile of the respondents for Section A using the multiple-choice question, followed by Section B, which focuses on future career anxiety that measures variables like potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, increasing unemployment, and job interest. The last section will be section C, which measures indecision.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where samples were chosen because they are convenient sources of data for this study. Additionally, the convenience sampling method may prove helpful as samples are readily accessible. In this case, final-year undergraduate students from semester five and semester six of the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management were selected as respondents. This was because they would enter the industry in less than a year.

During this current time of social distancing and lockdown implemented by the government due to rising COVID-19 cases, an online survey is the most suitable method to collect data for this research. Therefore, an online survey (Google Form) was conducted and distributed through a social media platform like WhatsApp as it reaches people faster and more personally. The online survey was conducted during Movement Control Order 3.0, implemented by the government. This was hoping that students would have free time to participate in the online survey as most of them were at home. For the final data collection, the online survey was distributed for two weeks for the researcher to get enough respondents to answer the survey. This was done to collect data. The online survey questionnaire has been designed so that responders may respond just once. It is to maintain control and prevent respondents from answering the same questionnaire multiple times.

4 Findings

4.1 Demographic Profiles

Respondent demographic profiles such as gender, program, and semester were analyzed in the study. The data showed that most respondents were female, with 143 respondents (84.1%), while the other 27 respondents were male (15.9%). A high percentage of female respondents was expected as most final-year students were female compared to males. Out of 170 respondents, 37 respondents (21.8%) were

Hotel Management students, and 133 respondents (78.2%) were Culinary Arts students. Culinary Arts students constituted most of the population since they have a large number compared to Hotel Management students who only have one class. Table 1 below illustrates the respondent's profile.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Items	Frequencies (n=170)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	27	15.9
Female	143	84.1
Programme:		
Hotel Management	37	21.8
Culinary Arts	133	78.2

4.2 Multiple Linear Regression

Multiple regressions were used to observe the study's research hypotheses H1 and five sub-hypotheses of H1. It is essential to use multiple linear regression to find out the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study. Kumar et al. (2013) stated that multiple linear regression is a statistical technique in research that shows the relationship between one dependent variable and more than one independent variable in the study.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the influence of future career anxiety on indecision among students undergoing COVID-19. This was described in Research Objective 1 and Research Hypothesis 1 below.

RO1: To examine the influence of future career anxiety towards indecision among students amid COVID-19.

H1: There is a significant influence between future career anxiety and indecision among students amid COVID-19.

Multiple linear regression was calculated to predict Indecision (DV) based on Future Career Anxiety (IV). Based on Table 2, the r-value is .660, and the p-value is .000. This demonstrates that the variables have a significant correlation or linear relationship. This means that there were strong correlations between future career anxiety and indecision. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines for interpreting the magnitude of a correlation (see Table 3), $r = 0.1$ to 0.3 , $r = 0.30$ to 0.5 , and $r = 0.5$ to 1.0 were recommended to be considered as weak, moderate, and significant in magnitude, respectively. This can be supported as Cohen's recommendation on impact

magnitude was based mainly on perception (Cohen, 1988). In other words, the result shows that there is a strong positive relationship between future career anxiety and indecision. Hence, this result meets research objective 1, and hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 2: Model Summary for Future Career Anxiety

Model Summary^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.660 ^a	.436	.418	4.60830

a. Predictors: (Constant), Job Interest, Fierce Competition, Salary, Increasing_Unemployment, Potential_Economic_Recession

b. Dependent Variable: Indecision

Respondents' predicted indecision is equal to $9.962 + .369$ (potential economic recession) $+ -.144$ (fierce competition) $+ .037$ (salary) $+ .720$ (increasing unemployment) $+ 1.474$ (job interest), where all was coded or measured as 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Hence, for the same fierce competition, salary, increasing unemployment, and job interest, every unit increase in the potential economic recession, indecision will also increase by .369; (2) for the same potential economic recession, salary, increasing unemployment, and job interest, every unit increase in fierce competition, indecision will also increase by -.144; (3) for the same potential economic recession, fierce competition, increasing unemployment, and job interest, every unit increase in salary, indecision will also increase by .037; (4) for the same potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, and job interest, every unit increase in increasing unemployment, indecision will also increase by .720; (5) for the same potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, and increasing unemployment, every unit increase in job interest, indecision will also increase by 1.470. Basically, the respondent's indecision will increase when each unit of measure in future career anxiety increases. In the model summary table, the regression model provides 43.6% of the variation (R Square) in total indecision. The other predictor factors that are not included in the data set account for the remaining 56.4%. Hence, future career anxiety was a significant predictor of indecision.

Meanwhile, The ANOVA table (see Table 3) reveals a p-value of less than .001, meaning it is less than .05, which indicates that indecision can be predicted using all five sub-dimensions, including potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, increasing unemployment, and job interest of future career anxiety. The analysis showed a significant influence of future career anxiety on indecision at $p < .05$ that the variance changes in the score of job interest [$F(5,154) = 23.81, p = 0.00$].

Table 3: Regression ANOVA Table for Future Career Anxiety

4.3 ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2528.372	5	505.674	23.812	.000 ^b
1 Residual	3270.403	154	21.236		
Total	5798.775	159			

a. Dependent Variable: Indecision

b. Predictors: (Constant), Job Interest, Fierce Competition, Salary, Increasing Unemployment, Potential_Economic_Recession

Based on the Coefficient Table below, the only significant variable is job interest, with a value of .000, which is less than .05. The other four variables, including potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, and increasing unemployment, showed the value of more than .05, which indicates that the variables are slightly significant. As a result, there is just one variable that is a significant predictor.

Table 4 shows the considerable influence of the variables using the Standard Coefficient Beta (β), generally known as Beta loading values. It reveals which variables are significant for the model by examining their values despite the degree of influence, whether positive (+) or negative (-). According to the table, independent variables have a substantial influence on dependent variables. These predictors imply a positive influence on indecision. Whenever the quality of future career anxiety's dimensions increases, it will lead to even more indecision. It can be concluded that all five sub-dimensions are only moderately significant predictors of indecision. The result showed that the highest influence on indecision among all five sub-dimensions was job interest (β of .543, $p < 0.5$), followed by the rest of $p > .05$ with increasing unemployment ($\beta = .165$, $p > .05$), potential economic recession ($\beta = .079$, $p > .05$), salary ($\beta = .009$, $p > .05$), and the last one, fierce competition ($\beta = -.028$, $p > .05$). Hence, this finding fulfils RO1 and meets research hypothesis 1. The dependent variable moderately influenced the five sub-hypotheses.

Table 4: Coefficient Table for Future Career Anxiety

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	9.962	4.741		2.101	.037		
Potential Economic Recession	.369	.422	.079	.876	.382	.448	2.233
Fierce Competition	-.144	.453	-.028	-.317	.752	.462	2.166
Salary	.037	.347	.009	.107	.915	.521	1.919
Increasing Unemployment	.720	.381	.165	1.891	.061	.479	2.088
Job Interest	1.474	.188	.543	7.832	.000	.763	1.310

a. Dependent Variable Indecision

4.4 Hypotheses Summarization

Table 5 demonstrates the summarization of Standard Coefficient Beta (β), including Section B (Future Career Anxiety) and Section C (Indecision). Seven hypotheses were formulated in this study and described in Table 6. Only one sub-dimension (job interest) was fully supported, and the other three sub-dimensions (potential economic recession, salary, and increasing unemployment) were partially supported as the $p > .05$ and the coefficient values showed a weak relationship. The other sub-dimension (fierce competition) was not supported as it showed negative value.

Table 5: Summary of Standard Coefficient Beta (β)

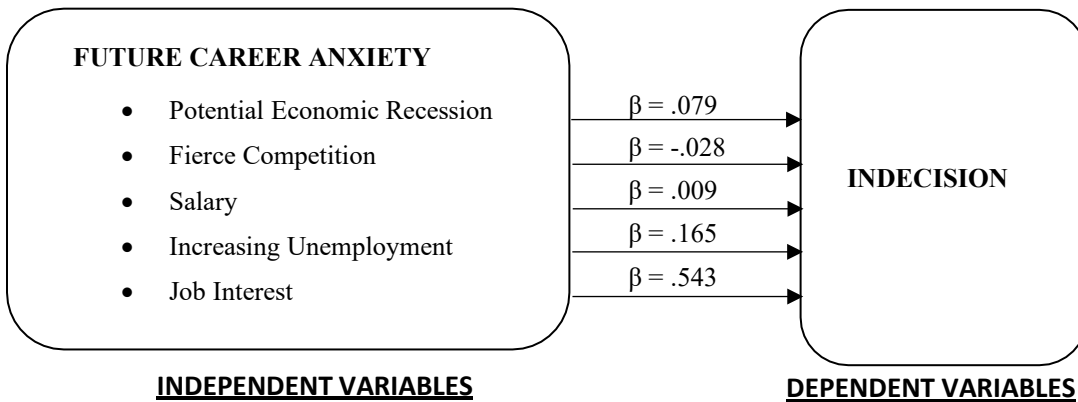


Table 6: Hypotheses Summarization

Hypothesis	Sub-hypotheses	Statement of Hypotheses	Remarks
H1	-	There is a significant influence between future career anxiety and indecision among students amid COVID-19.	Fully supported
	H1 (a)	Potential economic recession has a positive influence on Indecision.	Partially supported
	H1 (b)	Fierce competition has a positive influence on Indecision.	Not supported
	H1 (c)	Salary has a positive influence on Indecision.	Partially supported
	H1 (d)	Increasing unemployment has a positive influence on Indecision.	Partially supported
	H1 (e)	Job interest has a positive influence on Indecision.	Fully supported

5 Discussion

This study investigates how future career anxiety affects students' indecision. Future career anxiety is measured by five sub-dimensions: potential economic recession, fierce competition, salary, increasing unemployment, and job interest.

The data were collected from 170 students of the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM Pulau Pinang, Permatang Pauh campus. They were in semesters five and six. An online survey was conducted via WhatsApp for two weeks. The data were analyzed using SPSS Software with various techniques. Cronbach's Alpha analysis was used to test the internal consistency of the measurements, followed by a multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses of this study.

The results showed that two hypotheses were fully supported, three hypotheses were partially confirmed, and one hypothesis was not supported by evidence. The multiple regression analysis revealed that future career anxiety had a significant favourable influence on indecision, explaining 43.6% of the variance. This means that the higher the level of future career anxiety, the higher the level of indecision. Among the five sub-dimensions of future career anxiety, job interest had the most decisive influence on indecision, followed by increasing unemployment, potential economic recession, salary, and fierce competition. These findings suggest that students are anxious about their future careers due to the uncertain job market caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which leads to difficulties in making career decisions. This is consistent with previous studies that found a positive relationship between career

anxiety and career indecision (Mahmud et al., 2020; Daniels et al., 2011; Peng et al., 2012; Seker, 2020).

6 Conclusion

This study has practical implications for universities and industry stakeholders. The study highlights the need for universities to provide more comprehensive career development programs that address students' challenges in the face of career uncertainty. Industry stakeholders can also play a critical role in supporting students by providing mentorship, internships, and other opportunities that help students gain practical experience and build their confidence in the job market.

In addition, this study has significant implications for policymakers and industry leaders in developing economic recovery strategies. The study highlights the need for policymakers to consider the impact of future career anxiety on the workforce. It also highlights the need to provide targeted support to strengthen the global economy among the younger working class. For example, policymakers could incentivize companies to hire recent graduates. They could also offer training programs to help students develop the skills needed for the job market and invest in industries likely to experience growth in the post-pandemic economy. However, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of these strategies may vary depending on each region's specific context and needs. Therefore, policymakers and industry leaders should work closely with universities and other stakeholders to develop tailored strategies that address the unique challenges students and the broader workforce face.

This current study had some limitations when conducted. The first limitation relates to the population and sample of this study. Since the researcher only targeted final-year undergraduate hospitality students of the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM Pulau Pinang, Permatang Pauh campus, the population and sample became small. Future studies may extend this study by broadening the target respondents. This may include final-year undergraduate hospitality students from UiTM all over Malaysia and other public and private universities in Malaysia. A larger sample size will improve the findings' generalization of the results.

The second limitation is the five sub-dimensions of the independent variables, future career anxiety. As this research used only a single source, the five sub-dimensions may not indicate future career anxiety. A future study may discover other dimensions that contribute to career anxiety. Hence, further studies may expand the dimensions or collate the possible significance of those sub-dimensions among students from different industries.

Third, this study did not track individual undergraduate students to see their career decisions. It did not track whether the decision alleviated their anxiety and indecision or whether negative thoughts and emotions continued. This kind of longitudinal data study might be helpful in understanding students' progress with career anxiety and indecision. It also clarifies the long-term consequences for students

who do not address these negative thoughts and emotions. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic seems endless, students may make several career decisions to survive in today's rapidly shifting economy. Further research could examine whether students' improved sense of control helps with later career concerns and anxiety and uncertainty during the early stages of their education.

7 About the author

Fatin Nadhirah binti Zulfakar (B.Sc., Dip.) is a former student at Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia. She successfully graduated with Bachelor of Science (Hons.) in Hotel Management. Currently, she is employed by Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur as a Housekeeping Coordinator in the Housekeeping department. This is her first academic publication.

Joesri bin Mohamad Saber (M.Sc., B.Sc., Dip.) is a Senior Lecturer of hospitality management at Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia. He has co-authored over 19 articles and proceeding papers on varied hospitality management topics. His research interests include service management, service marketing and risk management.

Mohd Zoofadli bin Ibrahim (M.Sc., B.Sc., Dip.) is a Senior Lecturer of hospitality management at Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia. He has 20 academic publications in hospitality management and was also appointed as a reviewer for international journal and conference proceeding papers. His areas of interest include service quality and service management.

Azlan bin Salim (M.Sc., B.Sc., Dip.) is a Senior Lecturer of hospitality management at Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia. He has co-authored 12 academic publications including on restaurant management, hospitality, service management and service marketing. His current research interests are event management and barista management.

Mastura binti Abdul Ghani (B.Sc., Dip.) is a Senior Assistant Lecturer of hospitality management at Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia. This is her first academic publication. Her current research interests are hospitality management and service management.

Dr. Johanudin Lahap@Wahab (Ph.D) is an Associate Professor of hospitality management at Universiti Teknologi Mara Pulau Pinang Branch, Malaysia, where he specializes in strategic management and service management. With a Ph.D. in Service & Strategic Management from Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia, Dr. Johanudin brings over 23 years of teaching experience to his role. He published more than 40 academic articles from 2003 to 2023.

8 References

- Anthony, G., Mensah, I., & Amissah, E. F. (2023). Factors Influencing Undergraduate Hospitality Students' Intentions to Choose Careers in the Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 35(4), 317–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2021.1963754>
- Arumugam, T. (2020, August). More taking on tough jobs to survive. *New Straits Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/08/613564/more-taking-tough-jobs-survive>
- Aucejo, E. M., French, J., Araya, M. U., & Zafar, B. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on student experiences and expectations: Evidence from a survey. *Journal of Public Economics*, 191, 104271.
- Azuddin, A., & Zakaria, I. (2020, May 15). How the MCO Affected Income, Jobs, and Mental Well-being. Part 2: Income and jobs during the MCO. The Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.centre.my/post/mco-employment-income-jobs-mental-health>
- BBC. (2020). Coronavirus: Worst economic crisis since 1930s depression, IMF says. *Coronavirus Pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52236936>
- BH Online. (2020, May 14). Covid-19 tidak akan hilang - WHO. *Berita Harian Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.bharian.com.my/dunia/eropah/2020/05/688538/covid-19-tidak-akan-hilang-who>
- Charles, G., & Anderson-Nathe, B. (2020). Uncertainty in the Time of Coronavirus. *Child & Youth Services*, 41, 1-2.
- Chi, X., Becker, B., Yu, Q., Willeit, P., Jiao, C., Huang, L., . . . Solmi, M. (2020). Prevalence and Psychosocial Correlates of Mental Health Outcomes Among Chinese College Students During the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11, 803.
- CodeBlue. (2021, June 25). Beware The Fifth Wave Of Covid-19 - Dr Amar-Singh HSS. *CodeBlue*. Retrieved from <https://codeblue.galencentre.org/2021/06/25/beware-the-fifth-wave-of-covid-19-dr-amar-singh-hss/>
- Coibion, O., Gorodnichenko, Y., & Weber, M. (2020). Labor Markets During the COVID-19 Crisis: A preliminary View. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series*, No. 27017. doi:10.3386/w27017
- Daniels, L. M., Stewart, T., Stupnisky, R., Perry, R., & Lo Verso, T. (2011). Relieving career anxiety and indecision: The role of undergraduate students' perceived control and faculty affiliations. *Social Psychology of Education*, 14, 409-426.
- Elmer, T., Mepham, K., & Stadfeld, C. (2020). Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students' networks and mental health before and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland. *PLoS ONE*, 15(7), e0236337.
- Employers, I. o. (2020). *Covid-19: Global Impacts on graduate recruitment*. London.
- Hirschmann, R. (2020, November 23). Travel, Tourism & Hospitality: Number of people employed in the tourism industry in Malaysia from 2011-2019. *Statista*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/954719/employment-tourism-industries-malaysia/>
- Hwayan, O. A. (2020). Predictive Ability of Future Anxiety in Professional Decision-Making Skill among a Syrian Refugee Adolescent in Jordan. *Hindawi - Occupational Therapy International*.
- Islam, M. A., Barna, S. D., Khan, M., & Hossain, M. (2020). Depression and anxiety among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh: A web-based sectional survey. *PLoS ONE*, 15(8), e0238162.

- Kaur, A. (2020). Coping mentally when unemployed. UM Specialist Centre. Retrieved from https://umsc.my/expert_article/coping-mentally-when-unemployed/
- Keskin, G. (2021). Self-Report Measurement of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Caused by COVID-19 Pandemic in Senior Undergraduate Dental Students. *Brazilian Research in Pediatric Dentistry and Integrated Clinic*.
- Khan, K. I., Niazi, A., Nasir, A., Hussain, M., & Iqbal Khan, M. (2021). The effect of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry: The implication for open innovation. *Journal of Open Innovation*, 7, 30.
- Kim, T. J., & von dem Knesebeck, O. (2015). Is an insecure job better for health than having no job at all? A systematic review of studies investigating the health-related risks of both job insecurity and unemployment. *BMC Public Health*, 15, 985.
- Kumar, M., Talib, S. A., & Ramayah, T. (2013). *Business Research Method*.
- Lane, C. (2020, April 27). How Graduates Can Get Hired During Coronavirus Pandemic. Top Universities. Retrieved from <https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/careers-advice/how-graduates-can-get-hired-during-coronavirus-pandemic>
- Lee, S. A., Jobe, M., & Mathis, A. (2020). Mental health characteristics associated with dysfunctional coronavirus anxiety. *Psychological Medicine*. doi:10.1017/S003329172000121X
- Mahmud, M., Talukder, M. U., & Rahman, S. (2020). Does 'Fear of COVID-19' trigger future career anxiety? An empirical investigation considering depression from COVID-19 as a mediator. *SAGE Public Health Emergency Collection*.
- Martin, E., & Bloomberg. (2020, April 14). 'This crisis is like no other': Coronavirus recession will likely be worst since the Great Depression, predicts IMF. *Fortune*. Retrieved from <https://fortune.com/2020/04/14/coronavirus-recession-predictions-great-depression-covid-19-lockdown-crisis-imf/>
- Miller, S. (2020, April 1). Pandemic forces employers to cut pay. *SHRM*. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hrtopics/compensation/pages/pandemic-forces-employers-to-cut-pay.aspx>
- Mostert, K., & Botha, H. (2013). Significant predictors associated with the career uncertainty of university students. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 27(3), pp. 501-521.
- Musa, Z. (2020, October 19). Tough times for fresh graduates. *The Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/10/19/tough-times-for-fresh-graduates>
- Ng, E. S., & Burke, R. (2006). The next generation at work - business students' views, values and job search strategy: Implications for universities and employers. *Education and Training*, 48(7), 478-492.
- Nortajuddin, A. (2020, June 3). Malaysia's Hospitality Industry KO'd by Pandemic. *The Asean Post*. Retrieved from <https://theaseanpost.com/article/malaysias-hospitality-industry-kod-pandemic>
- OECD. (2020). An assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on job skills demand using online job vacancy data. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Peng, H. H., Johanson, R., & Chang, M.-H. (2012). Career indecision and state anxiety of returned international Chinese undergraduate students in Taiwan. *International Journal of Psychology and Counseling*, 4(9), 106-114.
- Perez, M. (2020, April 9). Economic hit from coronavirus will be worst since the great depression, IMF Warns. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattperez/2020/04/09/the-economic-hit-from-coronavirus-will-be-worst-since-the-great-depression-imf-warns/?sh=49a9e59a4f9c>

- Phua, R. (2020, August 19). Challenging job-hunting landscape as recruitment agencies see fewer vacancies and more applications. Channel News Asia. Retrieved from https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/jobs-fewer-vacancies-more-applications-covid-19-employment-13026418?cid=h3_referral_inarticlelinks_24082018_cna
- Posel, D., Oyenubi, A., & Kollamparambil, U. (2021). Job loss and mental health during COVID-19 lockdown: Evidence from South Africa. *PLoS ONE*, 16(3).
- Seker, G. (2020). Well-Being and Career Anxiety as Predictors of Career Indecision. *Pamukkale University Journal of Education*. doi:10.9779/pauefd.706983
- Sheng, E. (2020, June 27). Coronavirus dashes job hopes for hospitality grads, but experts still see opportunity. CNBC. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/27/coronavirus-sinks-jobs-for-hospitality-grads-but-experts-see-opportunity.html>
- Sundarasan, S., Chinna, K., Kamaludin, K., Nurunnabi, M., Baloch, G. M., Khoshaim, H. B., Sukayt, A. (2020). Psychological Impact COVID-19 and Lockdown among University Students in Malaysia: Implications and Policy Recommendations. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 6206.
- Surendran, S. (2021, January 11). Surviving The Impact of Covid-19: A trying year for job holders. *The Edge Markets*. Retrieved from <https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/surviving-impact-covid19-trying-year-job-holders>
- Top Universities. (2020). Hospitality & Leisure Management. QS Top Universities. Retrieved from <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/university-subject-rankings/2020/hospitality-leisure-management>
- Travel Industry Network Media. (2021, March 16). Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UiTM, is listed in the Top 100 in the QS World University Ranking 2021. Travel Industry Network Media. Retrieved from <https://www.m.tin.media/news/details/faculty-of-hotel-and-tourism-management-uitm-is-listed-in-the-top-100-in-the-qs-world-university-ranking-2021>
- Tsai, C.-T., Hsu, H., & Hsu, Y.-C. (2017). Tourism and Hospitality College Students' Career Anxiety: Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 29(4), 158-165.
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2020, March 13). Coronavirus puts up to 50 million Travel and Tourism jobs at risk says WTTC. World Travel & Tourism Council. Retrieved from <https://wttc.org/News-Article/Coronavirus-puts-up-to-50-million-Travel-and-Tourism-jobs-at-risk-says-WTTC>
- Yetgin, D., & Benligiray, S. (2019). The effect of economic anxiety and occupational burnout levels of tour guides on their occupational commitment. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 333–347.
- Zahiid, S. J. (2020, June 14). Covid-19 lockdown: Malaysians with pay cuts struggled more than jobless to pay bills, survey found. *Malay Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/06/14/covid-19-lockdown-malaysians-with-pay-cuts-struggled-more-than-jobless-to-p/1875359>