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PERSONALITY FACTORS IN RELATION TO STUDENTS PREPAREDNESS TOWARD WORKPLACE.

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ABSTRACT.

Employees' personality have great impact on their behavior and performance at the workplace. Since, the workplace has undergone significant changes, graduating polytechnic students need to prepare themselves with technical skills and good personality in order to be successful in the workplace. The purpose of the study was to investigate if there was any positive relationship between commerce student personality factors with their preparedness towards workplace. It was hypothesized that students with high self-esteem, self-monitoring and locus of control would have performed successfully in terms of industrial training performance, academic achievement and perceived ability to perform at workplace. The methodological approach was by systematic random sampling using a structured, 68 items questionnaire which was distributed to 252 commerce students in Malaysian polytechnics. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS and it was found that there was a positive significant relationship between self-monitoring and students perceived ability to perform at workplace. Commerce students need the personality factors in their business tasks which can be developed by proper training. It was recommended that further research on this subject be conducted with larger sample size and by taking into consideration of other factors such as teaching methods, length of training and the relevancy of the course contents.

Keywords- personality factors, self-esteem, self-monitoring, locus of control, preparedness, workplace.

Over the years, due to the Malaysians economic growth, the workplace has undergone significant changes in the sense that workers need to prepare themselves with certain skills and trade in order to be successful in the workplace.

These changes include the globalization of the world market and the explosive growth in technology on the job (Drucker, 1989) Explosive growth in technology especially information technology has resulted in the need for high levels of training. The majority of jobs will require employees to have received relatively of some educational or vocational training.

Employers have voiced this need for better educated and trained workers . In addition they are looking for personal qualities in potential workers such as integrity, honesty, social ability, competitiveness, initiative and drive (Black, 1994)

Research has shown that employees personality, values and gender orientation have had great impact on their behavior on the job. Personality related variables, for example have been thought to be a major influence on the job performance (Schermerhorn et al, 1994).

As one of the socialization agents in society, the education system plays an important role in preparing students for the future career (Black, 1994). Students are being prepared to become economically productive members of the society and become socially responsible individuals who are willing to perform based on the norm set by the society.

It is really very surprising that research revealed that school leavers do not have the know how to perform effectively on the job because they do not have the necessary competencies, basic skills and personal qualities. Thus it is very important to investigate students personalities to explain their preparedness towards the workplace.

Beside that employers are looking for employees who have not only the technical knowledge and skills but also positive work attitude. Students graduating from any training program i.e. polytechnic, therefore should have positive work attitude in order to be successful in the workplace (Zakaria, 1993).

Commerce students graduating from polytechnics in Malaysia should have positive attitude towards workplace. Positive attitude come along with students personality factors. Poor work attitude could affect employees performance in their jobs. Oinonen (1981) stated that employers unanimously agreed that poor work attitude was the major reason that graduates lost their jobs.

Moreover Fierer (1974) believed that employers in business and industry needed employees who have pleasant personality, punctual, honest and dedicated. Because of that polytechnic lecturers should prepare students not only having technical skills but also the attitude and behavior that would make a smooth transition from training institution to workplace.

Furthermore Russon (1973) stated that the most successful salesmen are those who create a personal relationship with their clients. Personality has always been a factor in selling, even when the actual salesperson seems to be missing. displays are arranged, advertisement are planned and packages are designed to appeal to the personality of the buyer.

But individuals vary with regard to their personality and values. These variables are believed to influence individual performance (Schermerhorn, 1994), individual behavior (Tosi et al, 1990), sales performance of insurance sales persons (Nik Kamariah, 1994) and individual personality at workplace (Furnham, 1992).

In the foregoing discussion, it can see that it is very important to investigate the relationship between the polytechnic students' personality factors with preparedness towards the workplace.

PROBLEM STATEMENT.

Students seem to be less than adequately prepared to compete in the workplace. This has significant impact with regard to entry into the workforce, job retention and promotion. If the trend continuous, Malaysian companies will be at severe disadvantages in competing globally in the world market (Locke and Latham, 1990), Thus diminishing the general well being of society.

De Cenzo and Robin (1994) stated that our workforce is deficient in the skills to take us well into the new millenium. Our new entrants to the workforce simply are not adequately prepared.

The majority of research on preparing students for workplace has been at secondary school level. Research with regard to students preparedness for the workplace is needed to be conducted on the polytechnic level which will provides further insight for more adequate preparation of the polytechnic graduates. Therefore the study of relationship between students personality factors and their preparedness for the workplace is significant , relevant and timely.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

The objective of the study was to analyze the senior diploma students preparedness to perform in the workplace based on personality . It is also to assess whether senior diploma students differ with regard to the skills needed to compete in the workplace based on personality factors. This assessment will help to focus on areas for change and improvement in the curriculum development and teaching methods career counseling and industrial placement.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Various studies of personality and education have importance but often neglected implications for vocational guidance. Anthony (1973) found that development of ability follows a linear progressive increasing show up personality from the past.

Any way (Witt (1989) showed clear evidence of the interaction of locus of control with organization climate. Tett et al (1991) concluded that contrary to conclusion of certain past reviews, the present findings provide some ground for optimism concerning the use of personality measures in employee selection. There will be a growing relationship between occupational and personality psychology and that well designed and executed research will reveal not only which personality factors relate to various occupational behavior but why they do so.

Mitchell (1983) said that a person performance was thought to be approximately 70% determined by their own personality and only 30% by contextual factors.

Drawing along this line of thought, Furnham (1992) stated that the work of personality and academic performance preferences is highly salient to vocational psychology. Understanding the natures and types of academic task preferred by the different personality types is therefore highly salient to vocational psychology.

Consequently the three personality factors i.e. self esteem, self-monitoring and locus of control will be examined as independent factors in this study.

All the three have been found to be positively correlated to business performance. This implies that commerce students will successfully performed at the workplace.

These personality factors have been applied in various personal selling in past studies with business students as respondents.

Since the personality factor is said to be task-specific investigating these variables seem suitable to students because the job depends on self-esteem, self monitoring and having appropriate locus of control in order to succeed at the workplace.

Self-esteem, self monitoring are self-managed behaviors which could be nurtured in students by training (Howel et al, 1987). The three variables have great potential in predicting performance at workplace.

Previous research on self-esteem, self-monitoring and locus of control were shown on Table 1 below.
Table 1 : Previous research on Self-esteem, self monitoring and locus of control.

Personality variables	Researchers	Respondents	Performance measures
Self-esteem	Bagozi (1978) Greenhaus & Badin(1974) Korman (1970)	College students High school students	Rating on task performance Self-rating on hard and easy goal
Self-monitoring	Nik Kamariah (1994) Spiro & Weitz (1990) Fine and Gardial (1990)	Insurance salesmen Industrial salespersons MBA students	Self-rating manager rating Self-reported managers rating Self-reported rating on sales ability
Locus of control	Hollen & Williams (1987) Spiro & Weitz (1990)	Retail salespersons Industrial salespersons	Total sales& volume past and present Self-reported Managers rating

Using personality test in managerial selection are increasingly popular according to Robertson and Makin (1986). They found that about 36% of the organization used personality test for managerial selection than any other test. In 1989 the percentage had risen to 37% compared to 12% in 1984.

From 1984 to 1989 larger firms used personality test over 70% of the time and for managerial recruitment 86% of major French firms used personality testing at some stage (Shackleton et al, 1991) . In New Zealand and Australia the use of testing has increased dramatically both for selection of new employs for the purpose of promotion and exiting interview (Dakin et al, 1989).

Day and Silverman (1989) suggested that personality variables are useful predictors of job performance when carefully match with occupation and organization. Guion and Gottliers (1965) claimed that in some situation, for some purpose and personality measures can offer helpful prediction.

Personnel selection is primarily concerned with the prediction of performance at work. Implicit in the use of personality testing is the assumption that personality traits are important determinants of performance. Furthermore the linkages between personality and performance is based on the premise that they are relatively stable difference in personality and that these differences determine how individual will perform in different situation (Kriedt and Gadel, 1953)

SELF-ESTEEM AT WORKPLACE.

High self -esteem is when a person believes that he or she has positive traits, such as talents and excellent qualities as opposed to low self-esteem which is when a person
 feels untalented and lacking in qualities (Palladino, 1990)

Hollenbeck and Whitener (1988) illustrated their point that personality traits can and do predict occupational behavior by focussing specifically on self-esteem.

SELF-MONITORING AT WORKPLACE.

High self-monitors are persons who can readily adjustable behavior in any situation so as to produce positive reactions from others- they almost seen to be different persons in different situation (Snyder, 1987). Low self-monitors, on the other hand tend to do the same in all situations and do not make any adjustment to their behavior as the situation demands.

In almost all marketing jobs such as selling situations, self-monitoring or salesperson adaptability is necessary for improved sales performance (Spiro et al, 1990).

LOCUS OF CONTROL AT WORKPLACE.

Locus of control is where people place their beliefs about the cause of the outcomes of their behavior. Internal locus of control is when a person believes that the outcomes stem from internal factors such as their own effort, dignity and decisions. On the other hand is the external locus of control, when individual believes their outcomes are determined by external causes such as fate, luck and action of others (Rotter, 1996).

The locus of control concept has been effectively and enthusiastically applied to occupational behavior. Lawler (1971) found that among managers, internal are more likely to feel performance to outcome while external are less likely to have performance-to-outcome expectancy.

2PREPAREDNESS TOWARDS WORKPLACE

Preparedness refers to success potential, academic achievement and industrial training performance.

Academic achievement is measured by accumulative grade point average (CGPA)

Success potential is measured by students' perception on ability to perform at the workplace. Success is effective work performance through the application of competencies and foundation to the workplace (SCAN, 1991)

Industrial training performance is measured by supervisors rating in term of communication abilities, personal qualities and job performance i.e. technical skills, supervisory skills, quality of output, efficiency and effectiveness (Industrial Training Unit, POLIMAS, 1996).

In the study preparedness towards workplace is the dependent variables whereas the three personality factors are independent variables.

METHODOLOGY.

A quantitative research design was used to answer the hypothesis of the study. A primary research design is suitable in order to test hypothesis or the subject of the study (Sekaran, 1992).

SUBJECT.

The population of the study consisted of all senior commerce students at Malaysian Polytechnic enrolled in July 1996 as semester 6 students. The sample for the study was collected through systematic random sampling. The samples were students taking the diploma in accountancy, marketing and business studies courses.

The sample was determined to consist of 56 students from Polimas, 13 from PKB, 45 from PUO, 30 from PPD , 30 from Polisas, 30 from Poliku from a total of 252 students. But only 199 respondents returned the questionnaires which gave a 79% response rate.

INSTRUMENTATION.

The instrument used to collect data was a self-administered questionnaire to the sample in the classroom. The format of the questionnaire was designed using Spector (1988) for locus of control, Wolf and Lennox (1984) for self-esteem and self-monitoring. The students' ability was designed by Palladino (1990). The questionnaire was constructed to illicit information from senior diploma students and consisted of three parts with each part designed to illicit information with regard to independent variables (self-esteem, self-monitoring and locus of control) and dependent variables (preparedness : students self rated ability to perform, industrial training performance as rated by company's supervisor and academic achievement) and demographic profile.

PROCEDURE

The questionnaires were distributed to systematically and randomly selected final semester students in the polytechnics in Jitra, Kota Baharu, Ipoh, Kuantan , Kuching and Port Dickson. Kota Kinabalu Poltechnic was not included in the research because they have just started and students were in the first semester only.

The data collected were coded and analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive data were analyzed in the form of frequencies and percentages. They were tabulated in order to describe the sample with regard to students' personality factors and preparedness.

The information collected include the respondents course of study, gender, and ethnic origins

In determining the sample for the study, three diploma programs (business studies, accounting and marketing) students were randomly selected from their class register. The total number who completed the questionnaire from each program is shown in table 2.

Table 2..Respondents by course of study.

Program	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma in Marketing	86	43.2
Diploma in Accountancy	82	41.2
Dip. In Business Studies	31	15.6
Total	199	100

The frequencies of distribution for the variables gender is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	88	44.2
Female	111	55.8
Total	199	100

Ethnic origins of respondents is reported in Table 4

Table 4 : Ethnic origins of respondents

Ethnic origins	Frequency	Percentage
Malays	140	70.4
Chinese	46	23.1
Indian	11	5.5
Others	2	1.0
Total	199	100

The majority (70.4%) of the students were Malays. Forty six (23.1%) were Chinese, 11(5.5%) were Indians, while 2 (1.0%) were other races i.e. Siamese.

The research consist of three models which are best illustrated by the following linear equation.

$$Y1 = a + b1x1 + b2x2 + b3x3 + u \tag{1}$$

$$Y2 = a + b1x1 + b2x2 + b3x3 + u \tag{2}$$

$$Y3 = a + b1x1 + b2x2 + b3x3 + u \tag{3}$$

Y1 = students self reported ability to perform
Y2 = industrial training performance reported by company's supervisor
Y3 = academic performance CGPA
x1- x3 = personality factors (predictor variables)
b1 - b3 = regression coefficient
a = constant
u = standard error.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.

The hypothesis were tested in the study using pairwise correlation coefficient to determine if there was a significant relationship between the personality factors and students' preparedness towards workplace. Details of the result were shown in table 5 below.

Table 5 ; Pairwise Correlation matrix.

Variables	y1	y2	y3	x1	x2	x3
Ability	1.000					
Industrial training (y2)	.2031 p=.002	1.000				
Academic performance (y3)	-.1045 p=.072	.1275 p=.036	1.000			
Self-esteem (x1)	.1136 p=.056	.0178 p=.402	.0659 p=.177	1.000		
Self-monitoring (x2)	.1830 p=.005	-.1191 p=.047	.1398 p=.025	.1191 p=.047	1.000	
Locus of control (x3)	.1240 p=.041	-.0127 p=.430	-.0050 p=.472	-.0334 p=.320	.1124 p=.058	1.000

n=199 significant level of probabilities at $p<0.001$ and $p <0.01$ (1 tailed test)

For self-monitoring and ability , the score was (r=0.1830, p= 0.005) meaning that the $p < 0.01$ which was significant, therefore the hypothesis which says that, there is a significant relationship between self-monitoring and student ability to perform at workplace is partially supported. Therefore the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

In order to determine if the students personality such as self-esteem, self-monitoring and locus of control predict the behaviour at workplace in term of ability to perform. industrial training and academic performance, the data was treated with Stepwise Regression Analysis.

Table 6 : Stepwise Regression Result.

Dependent variables = Y1 (students ability to perform) R(sqd) = 0.35 N =199 F =7.01368 Sig.F = .0088						
Variables	Multiple R	R sqd change	B	beta	T	sight
Self-monitoring (constant)	0.1868	0.35	0.202	0.1868	2.648	0.0088

From the table above, the hypothesis stating that there is a significant relationship between students self-monitoring with ability to perform at workplace is supported when the regression result shows that self-monitoring accounted for 35% of variance in students ability to perform at workplace.

CONCLUSION

Employers need employees with good personality, educated , skilled and well prepared for the workplace. The program that prepares students for the workplace could contribute to the employability of students graduated from the polytechnics.
From the above analysis it could be inferred that the students who have high self-monitoring, i.e. the ability to change and adjust oneself to fit the situation is very important as business and marketing people are expected to be pleasant and smiling under all circumstances. This is especially true in sales job where it was said that everyday salesperson meets new customers and makes friends.

From behavioral aspect alone they must be able to deal effectively with customers who may have different social cultural and educational background. In order to achieve the organizational goal they have to adjust their behavior whenever necessary.

Whitney and Panitz (1995) found that there seem to be no substitute for salesperson with adaptability skills. Adaptable salespeople are sensitive to differing buying situations. They picked up cues from buyers and adjust their selling behavior. Less adaptable salespeople do not possess this sensitivity. Adaptability is learned behavior, therefore ongoing training to increase adaptability among salespeople should be encouraged and implemented.

In Malaysia , because marketing people have to adapt to different and distinct group of multi-racial and multi-cultural customers such as Malays, Chinese and Indians, it is possible that self-monitoring is much needed.
The finding is consistent with the finding of the study by Nik Kamariah (1995) who reported that insurance salesperson who have high self-monitoring and self-efficacy is likely going to perform better than those who have not. But however, the finding is inconsistent with findings of the research conducted in the USA by Dubinsky and Hartley (1986) which reported that self-monitoring is unrelated to performance earnings.

SELF ESTEEM AND PREPAREDNESS TOWARDS WORKPLACE.

Knowledge of an individual's personality can lead to more effective management (Tosi et al, 1990). The finding of the study suggest that students vary not only in personality, but what is more important is that students varies with their preparation toward workplace.
It was hypothesized that the higher the self-esteem ones has the better is the performance. In the research however it was found that self-esteem was not significant to students preparedness to students preparedness

toward workplace in term of students ability, academic performance and industrial training as rated by their supervisors.

High self-esteem can stand stressful situation as always experience by commerce students. Those high in self-esteem believe that their career is likely to satisfy their desires and that they possess more ability in order to succeed than those low in self-esteem. Obviously, self-esteem has an important influence on the job performance.

Anyhow, the finding in the study indicated that there was no significant relationship between self-esteem and students performance at the workplace. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Nik Kamariah (1995) among insurance salesmen in Malaysia which showed that there was no relationship between self-esteem and performance earning and performance rating.

LOCUS OF CONTROL AND PREPAREDNESS TOWARDS WORKPLACE.

In the research it was hypothesized that the higher the internal locus of control, the higher probability that the student will succeed at the workplace. The higher the external locus of control, the lesser the chances that the students will succeed at the workplace.
The finding shows that the coefficient value was negative meaning that there was a positive relationship between internal locus of control with preparedness towards workplace. If it was positive value meaning it has negative relationship between external locus of control and preparedness toward workplace.

The locus of control concept has been effectively and enthusiastically applied to occupational behavior. Paynes (1987) reported on a study that where locus of control correlated significantly with four out of five objective success measures of R & D professionals.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

To adequately prepare students for careers in commerce and industry, it is important that the instruction that they receive parallel to the skill that practitioners view as being important. Viewed from marketing perspective, the problem the educator faces is that of producing products (i.e. trained and well prepared students) that will meet the needs of the market (marketing companies). To the extent that this market is homogenous, the educator can simply identify the skills area that are deemed important by the market and incorporate them into the curriculum.

Therefore students could be informed of the heterogeneous nature of the job market and plan their course of study to include skills that are thought to be important by specific segment of marketing community that they wish to seek employment with (Messina et al, 1991).

Polytechnic career counseling unit could use personality test for employment and industrial placement. Perhaps personality test also should be given to those lecturers going for promotions or being assigned new duties to see whether the person fit the job. .

The organizational culture and environment influence the way lectures are conducted in the polytechnic which in turn contributed to the development of students personality and attitude. Perhaps the role of polytechnic is one of exposing students to different points of views and providing guidance in developing students potential growth, personality, leadership and individuality. This can be achieved through debates, class discussions, sales presentations, public speaking and elocution contest.

However, the finding of the study could be interpreted with caution. The current study represents a broad approach in assessing students' preparedness toward workplace. In the study, students preparedness and performance in the workplace were based on how performance was measured by the questionnaire. However, to be successful, students need to possess a combination of skills and competencies. This will vary depending on the job itself wherever applicable.

The finding of the study indicates that students differ in their personality and therefore in their preparedness towards workplace. Since personality develops over time, i.e .from one's childhood to present time, it could not be concluded on how much polytechnic could prepare their students for the workplace.

It is recommended that further research be conducted on this topic by using bigger samples, better instrument and other group of respondents. Other variables such as the relevancy of the curriculum, adequacy of the industrial training, teaching methodology, and religiosity and lecturers personality should be considered.

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