



Post Covid-19 Outbreak, Perception and Employability Rate: The Case Study of Alumni of Politeknik METrO Betong Sarawak

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Abstract

The Covid-19 outbreak has stunted the growth of economies all over the world and affected the job market as a whole. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the influence of post covid-19 outbreak in the relationship between perception and the employability rate of alumni from Politeknik METrO Betong Sarawak (PMBS). A total of 70 questionnaires were evaluated. The results revealed that there is no significant linear correlation between perception and employability rate (p -value=.936). Meanwhile, the results also revealed that there is significant linear correlation between post Covid-19 outbreak and employability rate (p -value=.049). However, this study found that post Covid-19 outbreak moderates the relationship between perception and employability rate (6.6% ($R^2 = .066$)). The results of the study are beneficial for both the higher learning institution and industry so as to align their educational programs with the changes in market needs.

Keywords: - Covid-19; perception; employability rate; job ready; technology-related skills; alumni; curriculum; career advancement

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1. Introduction

As an introduction of the study, this chapter discusses the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives as well as research questions. The theoretical framework, hypotheses, significance of study are also presented in this chapter.

1.1 Background of Study

With the recent launching of the COVID vaccination in Malaysia, it has giving people a ray of hope that this able to put an end to this global illness. However, many are still wondering how the economics and business recovery will look like. According to United Nation World Tourism Organization, travel and tourism is among the most affected factors and would put 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk. Travel restrictions were

imposed with many countries close its borders to tourist. As a result, international tourist arrival has also decreased tremendously, and these affected the revenue generated from the tourism industry (UNWTO, 2020).

However, Malaysia is generally projected to show a hike in gross domestic product (GDP) by 7.0% in 2021. It was further elaborated that the vaccine helps to ease the spreading of the virus, thus the recovery of economy will gradually take place (International Monetary Fund, 2021). Recently, Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents has submitted 37 recommendations to the government to help revive the tourism industry affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to the prolonged border closures and travel restrictions resulting in more than 5,000 travel agents being affected. This is essential in support of the industry to boost their business confidence (MATTA, 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

At the time this paper was written, Malaysia has just begun its vaccination exercise, where the front liners are among the first group to be vaccinated. At the same time, Malaysia is under movement control orders (MCO) and stricter curfews were imposed. According to Baum and Nguyen (2020), hospitality and tourism will undoubtedly re-emerge from the effects of the pandemic over an extended timeframe and at varying speeds in different countries, however with limited personal mobilities, it is still uncertain and remain unknown as to when people will have their full access to tourism and hospitality activities. This was of the same issue when Ebola attacked the west Africa and was said to have had impacted the travel and tourism industry longer than previous epidemics (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018). However, COVID-19 has claimed 2.5 million lives worldwide and 1130 death cases in Malaysia as of February 2021 (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2021) and despite the quarantines and curfew as well as policies introduced by the government bodies, it shows no sign of declining. Covid-19 outbreak is deemed as career shock that has affected people across career and life stages globally (Akkermans et al., 2020). In research conducted in India, Ellikkal and Rajamohan (2020) explained that COVID-19 impacted both graduates and non-graduates and job losses among graduates are quite high. It is of a much higher magnitude than previous crises because of its global scale and the widespread shutdown of travel, businesses, and life activities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

As eloquently stated by Suleman (2020), it is worth noting that those graduated in 2020 is transitioning into unstable labour market caused by the pandemic. Therefore, the researcher suggested the policy makers should investigate the design of labour market policies and aid them with social assistance as the graduates definitely are struggling to be in an internship programmes or land themselves a job offer. However, prior to this global illness, Bahrim et al. (2019) found that unstable economic, lack of skills and demanding attitude were among the setback of the unemployment among graduates. Graduates are picky about the company or the company that offering them a job or an interview (Balakrishnan, 2017).

In 2018, 96.15% of alumni chosen to work after completed their Diploma in Tourism Management in PMBS and the remaining 3.85% opt to further their studies (PMBS Tracer Study, 2018). However, according to Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), over 30, 000 employees in hotel sector in Malaysia have lost their jobs while 10, 000 workers have been forced to take unpaid leave because of the Covid-19 pandemic (Bernama, 2020). The top 3 hardest hit industries in Malaysia in terms of permanent or temporary unemployment have been the tourism/travel industry (63%), hospitality/catering industry (62%) and food and beverage industry (50%) and this crisis has affected the quality of life in comparison with life prior to Covid-19.

Job scarcity is heightening as organization has slow down their recruitment activity and that bring greater competition among job seekers (Jobstreet, 2020).

Therefore, noting the scarcity of job opportunity during the crisis, there is a need, and it would be interesting for this current study to explore on these two elements, namely employability rate and perception of tourism alumni from PMBS towards post COVID-19 outbreak.

1.3 Research Objective

The following research objectives guided the present study:

1. To investigate the relationship between perception and employability rate.
2. To identify the relationship of post COVID-19 outbreak and employability rate.
3. To analyse the moderating effect of post COVID-19 outbreak on perception and employability rate.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between perception and employability rate?
2. What is the relationship of post COVID-19 outbreak and employability rate?
3. To what extent does the post COVID-19 moderates the relationship between perception and employability rate?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

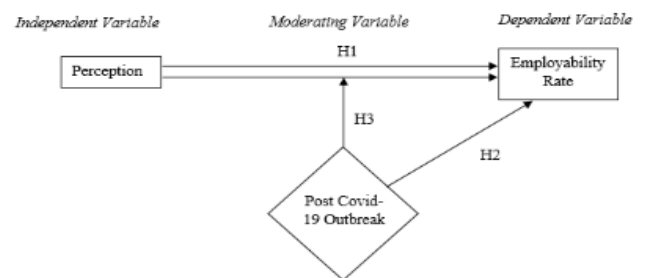


Fig. 1. Theoretical framework of present study

1.6 Hypotheses

- H1: There is a relationship between perception and employability rate.
 H2: There is a relationship between post COVID-19 outbreak and employability rate.
 H3: Post COVID-19 outbreak moderates the relationship between perception and employability rate.

1.7 Significance of Study

This study examined and verified the relationship between perception and employability rate, and the

moderating role of COVID-19 outbreak as a whole. Lack of competencies such as management, leadership, technical, strategic and operational skill were the results of training exposure and unrealistic expectations from industry in terms of preparedness to enter the real workplace environment. However, perceived crucial competencies are different across age group. Younger people value more on technical skills, whereas those with more years of experience put emphasis on soft skills, managerial and specific technical skills such as cultural awareness (Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2020).

This is congruent with De Witt (2018), where learning and team experiences aid in preparation for industry careers. Besides, presentation and interaction skills are perceived as important set of skills that contribute to career readiness. Information gained may help the future of all graduates as skill mismatch between the skills supplied by college graduates and skills demanded by hiring industries is deemed as an important mechanism behind the career loss by graduating during global issue such as recession (Liu et al., 2016). Besides, this will give an insight to the industry practitioners to relook into their current mechanism in handling practical students so that both parties will be getting maximum output out of this collaboration.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Covid-19 Outbreak

According to an article "COVID-19: Kerajaan umum perintah kawalan pergerakan mulai Rabu," the first COVID-19 case reported in Malaysia was on 25th January 2020, which involved 3 China citizen whom entered this country through Singapore (Berita Harian Online, 2020). As stated by Karim (2020), first positive case involving Malaysian reported on 4th February 2020. As COVID-19 worsening, on 16th March 2020, Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had announced the enforcement of Movement Control Order (MCO) that begun from 18 March 2020 until 31 March 2020 (Leong, 2020). This MCO involved restriction of mass gathering activities such as social, religious, sport and culture ("Malaysia: Government closes", 2020). All nonessential government sector, private businesses, schools and universities will not be opened until 31 March 2020 ("Malaysia: Government closes", 2020). As mentioned by Baum and Nguyen (2020) hospitality businesses can be expected to be re-open and how this industry capability to survive and revive remains an unknown in a post COVID-19 outbreak.

2.2 Employment During Covid-19

Human Resource Ministry claimed that up till 27 November 2020, nearly 100, 000 Malaysian have lost their income and jobs due to implementation of MCO in March 2020 (Tan et al., 2020). While the chief Executive Officer of Social Security Organization (SOCSO), Mohammad Azman Aziz as cited by Chung (2020), said one of many sectors hit worse by the pandemic were accommodation and food and beverage industry, which has an accumulated a total of 13, 053 job losses. This was

supported by data from the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), where its president mentioned that more than 100 hotels had closed their operations since the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO) in March 2020 and 7000 employees had directly affected while others lost their income on unpaid leaves or prolonged pay-cut (Kaur, 2021). Above all these, COVID-19 pandemic has exposed Visit Malaysia 2020 campaign a major risk due to the cancellation of hotels, flight tickets and tours to Malaysia (Foo et al., 2020). Chinazzi et al. (2020) also supported the statement as operators of hospitality and tourism in multiple countries have been ceased down and domestic (in some countries) and international travel has all but prohibited. Indeed, one of major factors behind the COVID -19 global spread were air and sea travel. However, according to data retrieved from IL5G (2021), in 2018, prior to the pandemic, the report recorded a total of 70% graduates of PMBS has obtained a job, regardless working in the field or vice versa.

2.3 Perception

In research conducted by Le et al., (2018), the researchers found that there is a mismatch between expectation of a student on entering the hospitality industry and the realities of working in the industry among the students of higher tertiary education. While students of vocational education and training are well-prepared for the lower-level operational roles, the students of higher tertiary education, on the other hand, perceived their chances of being promoted to a higher position are limited due to lack of consistency in the mechanism used in the industry, thus affecting their long-term commitment towards their career in the hospitality industry. Besides, in a research conducted by Chan (2017) in New Zealand, result indicated that long working hours, low wages and seasonality that influenced the availability of the job were the three significant issues that affected the attitudes of undergraduates towards a career in the hospitality industry. In the case of Generation Z, Goh and Okumus (2020) stressed that a clear career prospect should be made known to this group of workforce as they are keen on fast career advancement and being given the opportunity to work across properties and countries. Besides, in order to retain Generation Z as a workforce in tourism and hospitality industry and though personal human contact is the crucial element in hospitality service delivery, incorporating technology in the service rendered may actually help to increase job satisfaction among this group and indirectly increase satisfaction and loyalty of the customer. However, despite their questionable loyalty to stay in the industry, Generation Z view the hospitality profession as fun, interesting, exciting, fulfilling, and they value the travel opportunities that exist in the industry (Goh and Lee, 2018). Adding to this point, Sihite et al. (2019) reported that studying in the hotel and tourism school is a good investment to develop a career and is an excellent investment for the future of the student. Overall,

the nature of work of tourism industry which offering enjoyable and fun environment are considered important and earned positive perception (Rosyidi, 2021).

2.4 Employability Rate

According to Ministry of Education (MOE) (2017), employability rate from 2013 until 2017 for graduates of polytechnic showed an upward trend from 73.9% in 2013 to 94.5% in 2017 and the unemployment rate has significantly decreased from 26.1% in 2013 to 5.5% in 2017. The trend further improved in 2018 as the employability rate for graduates of polytechnics has increased from 94.5% in 2017 to 96.1% in 2018 and this has positively impacted the unemployment rate, as the figure drop from 5.5% in 2017 to 3.9% in the same year. Data also shown that male students have higher tendencies (96.5%) to be hired compared to female students (95.8%) (Ministry of Education, 2018). The employability rate of graduates from Politeknik Merlimau was reported at 98.97%, where only 1.03% graduates were still not able to secure for a job (Politeknik Merlimau, 2019). However, it was alarming when the neighboring country, considering the disruption of the job market by COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore has reported that only 87.4% of polytechnic graduates were employed within six months of graduating in 2020 compared to 90.7% in 2019.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

There is no perfect research design or research method, however, the tools a researcher selects will depend on the purpose and context of the study. However, perspectives do not determine methods, but they do influence how we approach research (Hyland, 2016). This research is a quantitative research design with self-administered structured questionnaire and was undertaken at PMBS. In consideration of the English language acquisition of the respondents and for their ease of reading, the survey is constructed using a dual language, English and Malay language. Exploratory design was the approach chosen for this study as its used to study social, psychological and economic processes through the exploration economic pattern. As it involved gathering a range of numeric data, it allows researchers to conduct a simple analysis such as questionnaire and also extremely sophisticated statistical analyses like structured observation and experiments. Instead focusing in broader sample, quantitative research focused on a particular group of people, called sample population (Ahmad et al., 2019). The overall items stated in the questionnaire was fully developed by researchers and proof-read by fellow English lecturer in PMBS.

3.2 Unit of Analysis

Diploma in Tourism Management is a program that being offer in PMBS since 2013. To date, 5 batches have successfully graduated from PMBS. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, only alumni from PMBS that have completed and graduated in Diploma in Tourism Management a year prior to the occurrence of Covid-19 and during Covid-19 were taken as the actual unit of analysis. A group of 22 students that were undergoing their practical training were used as sample in the pilot study.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

The sample consists of the alumni, who have graduated from PMBS in June and December 2019, as well as June 2020. PMBS has a total of 80 alumni of Diploma in Tourism Management from June 2019 till June 2020. In tourism field, sample size table by Isaac and Michael were frequently used by the previous researchers (Barkah et al., 2020; Mhlanga, 2019; Moyo and Tichaawa, 2017; Pramudita et al., 2020 and Silitonga, 2020). Therefore, the researchers adopted the same source for this current study. Based on sample size table by Isaac and Michael (1981), with 5% precision level, a total population of 80 required a minimum sample size of 66. It will be sufficient to represent the population at 95 percent confidence interval, allowing 5% for attrition or within the range of plus/minus 2.5%.

Data is analyzed and descriptive statistics were used to interpret the demographic profile. Regression analysis is employed to examine the impact of variables.

3.4 Data Collection Method

For the purpose of data collection, the study has employed cross sectional study where data were gathered at single point of time from individual student involved between Week 4 of March 2021 to Week 3 of April 2021. The personally-administered structured questionnaire was then analysed using appropriate statistical tools and measure that is in line with its research objectives, such as reliability test, coefficient correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

After discussion with the Alumni Officer and with consideration of the time efficiency, the questionnaires were distributed via Google form for the ease of both alumni and researchers. It took an overall of two weeks for the researchers to get response from all respondents. The link of the survey was given to academic advisor for them to help to disseminate to their former advisees accordingly.

3.5 Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out for clarity purposes of the questions onto 22 respondents who are soon to be alumni of PMBS once they have completed their 3-month practical training. Malmqvist et al., (2019) explained that the result obtained through pilot study allowed the researchers to do some modification and improvisation of the research design to best fit the research study. With this information gained, issues related to effectiveness of the instruments were identified, thus increase the effectiveness of the research instruments. The raw data was then converted to a numerical code and retyped into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 software for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation will be used in data interpretation of the demographic section.

3.6 Reliability Test for Instruments

According to UCLA (2021), Cronbach's alpha or coefficient alpha is a coefficient of consistency or reliability and it measures correlation between variables. The result of this test ranges from 0 to 1, in which 0.95 indicates a high degree of consistency between items and low measurement error.

Table 1. Reliability analysis of pilot study

Variables	N of items	Cronbach's alpha Coefficient, α
Section B : Perception	5	.980
Section C : Post Covid-19 Outbreak	5	.832
Section D : Employability Rate	5	.580

Table 1 above indicated that for this pre-testing questionnaire, the value for Cronbach's alpha coefficient, α were perception ($\alpha = 0.98$), post covid-19 outbreak ($\alpha = 0.83$) and employability rate ($\alpha = 0.58$) respectively. As mentioned by Taber (2017), reliability value within range of 0.58-0.97 can be considered as satisfactory. Thus, the value of reliability test, α ranges from 0.5 to 0.9, are considered reliable.

4. Finding and Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

This part was a descriptive analysis of demographic characteristics of the respondents, which consisted their gender, age, employment status, sector, tenure of service, period of waiting to get first job and number of job interview attended by the respondents.

As shown in Table 2, this research involved 70 alumni of PMBS and majority were female with 70% (N = 49) and the remaining 30% (N = 21) were male. The age of alumni involved ranges from 20 to 28 years old. Most of

the respondents are from 23 to 25 years old with 54.3% (N = 38), while those between 26 to 28 years old scored the lowest by 10% (N = 7). The table also depicted the employment status of the respondents. 45.7% (N=32) are currently working, with 44.3% (N=31) are not employed and 10% (N=7) are now pursuing their studies. However, only 44.3% (N=31) of the respondents are working in the tourism and hospitality and another 55.7% (N=39) are working in other fields. Tabulation of sectors are as follow:

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents

Respondent Profile	Classification	Frequency, N = 70	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	21	30
	Female	49	70
Age	20 – 22	25	35.7
	23 – 25	38	54.3
	26 – 28	7	10
	29 and above	0	0
Employment Status	In an Employment	32	45.7
	Unemployed	31	44.3
	Continue Study	7	10
Tourism & Hospitality Sector	Yes	31	44.3
	No	39	55.7
Tenure of Service	1 – 3 months	20	28.6
	4 – 6 months	13	18.6
	7 – 9 months	12	17.1
	10 – 12 months	6	8.6
	1 year and above	19	27.1
Period of Waiting to Get First Job	1 – 3 months	34	48.6
	4 – 6 months	14	20
	7 – 9 months	7	10
	10 – 12 months	4	5.7
	1 year and above	11	15.7
Number of Job Interview Attended	1	33	47.1
	2	14	20
	3	6	8.6
	4	4	5.7
	More than 5	13	18.6

Table 3 presented data derived from the information given by the alumni of PMBS. The highest percentage, 20.5% (N=8) represented those that working in retail

field. However, 12.8% (N=5) obtained from those that provide no information about their current working field. Lastly, there are 2.6% (N=1) of respondents are working in the field of automotive repair, manufacturing and pest control field respectively.

Table 3. Tabulation of field sector of respondents

Sector	Frequency (N=39)	Percentage (%)
Self-employed	4	10.3
Construction	3	7.7
Automotive Repair	1	2.6
Retail	8	20.5
Food Service	2	5.1
Delivery Service	2	5.1
Further Study	4	10.3
Unemployed	6	15.3
Government	2	5.1
Manufacturing	1	2.6
Pest Control	1	2.6
No Information Provided	5	12.8
Total	39	100.0

Further to discussion of data in Table 2, there are 28.6% (N=20) of respondents have already been working for a period of 1 to 3 months. Whereas, 27.1% (N=19) have been working for 1 year and above. 18.6% (N=13) of the respondents have work for a period of 4 to 6 month, followed by 17.1% (N=12) of respondents have been working for 7 to 9 months respectively, and lastly, only 8.6% (N=6) of the alumni of PMBS have been working for a period of 10 to 12 months.

48.6% (N=34) responded that they only waited for a period of 1 to 3 months before landed on their first job. Subsequently, 20% (N=14) of respondents indicated that they only waited for 4 to 6 months to get their first job, whereas 15.7% (N=11) have waited for 1 year and above to get a job after graduation. 10% (N=7) required 10 to 12 months to find their first job and marked the lowest was those that required 10 to 12 months with 5.7% (N=4).

Prior to be hired by the organization, 47.1% (N=33) alumni of PMBS responded that they only attended 1 job interview before straightaway being hired. While another 20% (N=14) indicated that they have attended job interviews twice before being offered the job, whereas 18.6% (N=13) have attended the sessions more than 5 times. 8.6% (N=6) and 5.7% (N=4) of respondents have attended 3 and 4 interviews, respectively.

4.2 Reliability Test

In order to assess the items developed for the questionnaire are consistently measuring the constructs, all variables were analysed through reliability test. Bolarinwa (2015) stated that the reliability coefficient (alpha) can range from 0 to 1, with 0 representing a questionnaire that is not reliable and 1 representing

absolutely reliable questionnaire. A reliability coefficient (alpha, α) of 0.60 or higher is considered acceptable reliability in exploratory research (Daud et al., 2018).

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value for all variables in this study revealed a range of coefficient value from .616 to .808 respectively. The independent variable of perception has a high reliability coefficient of .808 with 5 scale items. The coefficient value of post covid-19 outbreak is .667 with 5 scale items, whereas the dependent variable, employability rate with also 5 scale items, has a coefficient value .616.

Table 4. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for study variables

Variable(s)	Number of scale item(s)	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, α
Perception	5	.808
Employability Rate	5	.616
Post Covid-19 Outbreak	5	.667

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Three hypotheses were presented in this part. The first hypothesis determined the relationship between perception and employability rate. Second hypothesis determined the relationship between post COVID-19 outbreak and employability rate. Finally, the third hypothesis determined the moderating effect of post Covid-19 outbreak in the relationship between perception and employability rate.

4.3.1 Correlation Coefficient for Perception and Employability Rate

H1: There is A Relationship Between Perception and Employability Rate

Table 5 stated the figure of $r=.010$ indicates a very weak positive correlation between perception and employability rate, and with $p\text{-value}=.936$ higher than the significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), the correlation is not statistically significant. Hence, hypothesis 1 (H1) is not supported as there is no significant linear correlation between perception and employability rate.

Table 5. Results of Pearson correlation for perception on employability rate

		Perception	Employability Rate
Perception	Pearson Correlation	1	.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.936
	N	70	70
Employability_Rate	Pearson Correlation	.010	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.936	
	N	70	70

4.3.2 Correlation Coefficient for Post COVID-19 Outbreak and Employability Rate

H2: There is A Relationship Between Post COVID-19 Outbreak and Employability Rate

Table 6 stated the figure of $r=.237$ indicates a weak positive correlation between post covid-19 outbreak and employability rate, and with $p\text{-value}=.049$ smaller than the significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), the correlation is however, statistically significant. Hence, hypothesis 2 (H2) is supported as there is a linear correlation between post Covid-19 outbreak and employability rate.

Table 6. Results of Pearson correlation for post COVID-19 outbreak on employability rate

		Employability Rate	Post Covid-19 Outbreak
Employability Rate	Pearson Correlation	1	.237*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.049
	N	70	70
Post_Covid-19 Outbreak	Pearson Correlation	.237*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.049	
	N	70	70

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

4.3.3 Regression Analysis for Post Covid-19 Outbreak on Perception and Employability Rate

H3: Post COVID-19 Outbreak Moderates the Relationship Between Perception and Employability Rate

Table 7 disclosed that only 6.6% ($R^2 = .066$) of the variance in employability rate were collectively explained by both perception and post COVID-19 outbreak. Meanwhile, the remaining 93.4% can be explained by other variables do not present in this research. Thus, Covid-19 outbreak moderates the relationship between perception and employability rate and this supporting hypothesis 3 (H3).

Table 7. Results of linear regression for post Covid-19 on perception and employability rate

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.256 _a	.066	.038	3.251	1.930

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception, Post_Covid

b. Dependent Variable: Employability_Rate

5. Discussion, Limitation and Recommendation

5.1 Discussion of Findings

This section revolves around three research questions and three research hypotheses as postulated in the first chapter.

5.1.1 The Relationship Between Perception and Employability Rate

The objective of the first research question is to measure the relationship between perception and employability rate. The discussion on this research question was based on Hypothesis 1, which is:

H1: There is a relationship between perception and employability rate

Hypothesis 1 (H1) proposed that there is relationship between perception and employability rate among alumni of PMBS. Data gathered from the respondents are analysed using the correlation coefficient analysis presented in Table 5. For the purpose of this study, the element of perception measured the skills obtained during study such as team and internship experience, team collaboration, presentation and communication skills acquired by the alumni during the course of three years studied in PMBS. Based on the findings presented, it is observed that there is no significant linear correlation between perception and employability rate though the skills and knowledge imparted are crucial for their career readiness. This was emphasized by Çalışkan and Özkoç (2020), where hospitality industry demands functional and multiskilling employees, hence the suitable set of skills provided to them at school. However, the researchers argued that on-job training and personal development opportunities able to eliminate job insecurity and elevate the employment perception. Social media-based communication and marketing strategies, green skills, an extensive portfolio of language and cultural skills are among the new skills that organizations warrant to accommodate business needs.

However, the skills gained by alumni of PMBS throughout their study is consistent with the previous research. In current labor market in Malaysia, ethic and professionalism are the qualities that graduates must possess as it is required by the competitive job market (Adnan et al., 2017). On the other hand, Pereira et al. (2019) argued that employability rate may be measured through amount of funding and larger number of vacancies available in the courses offered by higher institution as this reflects the quality and status of the institution itself. Besides, the researchers also noted that entrepreneurial skills are among the skills listed as needed in most fields that help a smooth transition from education to labor market. Notably, entrepreneurship is deemed as an important field as it aids new job creation that indirectly affect the economic growth in Malaysia (Nagarathanam and Buang, 2016). Hence, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

5.1.2 The Relationship Between Post COVID-19 Outbreak and Employability Rate

The objective of the second research question seek to identify the relationship of post COVID-19 outbreak and

employability rate. The discussion on this research question was based on Hypothesis 2, which is:

H2: There Is a Relationship Between Post COVID-19 Outbreak and Employability Rate

Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposed that post Covid-19 outbreak influences the employability rate of alumni in PMBS. Data gathered from the respondents are analysed using the correlation coefficient analysis presented in Table 6. Based on the findings presented, it is observed that there is a weak positive correlation between post covid-19 outbreak and employability rate. Covid-19 has likely to affect the vulnerability of people and heighten the risk of unemployment (Suomi et al., 2020). According to Gill (2020), Covid-19 has forced the workforce to work online remotely (or also known as work from home) and be familiar with flexible working arrangements. As a result, workers now need an updated set of employability skills, particularly skill in digital media usage, to navigate remote communication in this new norm. The researcher further emphasized that students who already have working experience during Covid-19 outbreak has gain a distinct advantage in the graduate recruitment process against students that have not experienced such working conditions.

Kamaruddin et al. (2020) stated that graduate employability has become the issue since economic slowdown due to Covid-19 outbreak. It is due to employment opportunities have sharply decreased due to the rise in number of closed businesses due to inability to survive during COVID-19. Thus, students perceived that COVID-19 have a significant impact on the prospect of works in the future as compared to science students. Hence, the findings of the study confirm that Hypothesis 2 (H2) is supported as there is relationship between post Covid-19 outbreak and employability rate.

5.1.3 The Moderating Effect of Post Covid-19 Outbreak in The Relationship Between Perception and Employability Rate

The objective of the third research question is to identify whether post Covid-19 outbreak has a moderating effect on perception and employability rate. Data gathered from the respondents are analysed using the correlation coefficient analysis presented in Table 7. Based on the findings presented, it is observed that employability rate was collectively explained by both perception and Post COVID-19 outbreak.

H3: Post COVID-19 Outbreak Moderates the Relationship Between Perception and Employability Rate

Table 7 disclosed that only 6.6% ($R^2 = .066$) of the variance in employability rate were collectively explained by both perception and Post COVID-19 outbreak. Meanwhile, the remaining 93.4% can be explained by other variables not present in this research. Generation Y seen a proper career management influenced career expectation in an organization, and career expectation

positively affects organizational identity and career satisfaction (Kong et al., 2020). This is in line with (Fok and Yeung, 2016), where the researchers highlighted that organizational culture and human resource management strategies, as well as external environment, can influence the work attitudes and loyalty of generation Y. While the American students shown a positive attitude towards the idea of choosing a career in the industry, students from Macau, on the other hand, showed less optimism with regards to this issue, though both group shared the same negative thoughts about the industry such as issues on job stability, low skill set, low social status and low pay.

Other than that, Al-Youbi et al. (2020) have stated that preventive measures taken by governments all over the world to contain the spread of Covid-19 has undeniably affected the socioeconomic of many countries. This scenario would put 100 to 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk (UNWTO, 2020). Businesses were left with no choice but to shut down their operation, left the workers become unemployed, while some are working on reduced wages. The researchers also noted that new set of skills are highly favored in education, service and healthcare sectors. As the new norm requires workers to work remotely from home and be virtually available. Virtual skills acquisition among other soft skills highlighted by the researchers, may improve the chance of workers to be retained and hired. However, irrigation, tourism, manufacturing and construction sectors assigned less importance to the development of new skills in the COVID-19 pandemic and instead emphasized conventional skills among their workers as these sectors require their workers to be present on site for their day-to-day operations. This brought to the bottom line, where by putting pandemic covid into perspective, this requires a renewed alignment and a strong collaboration between the labor market and educational institutions.

A new curriculum that keeps pace with the current technological developments, internship and project work must be made mandatory in order for industry partnership successful (Adnan et al., 2017 and Zeidan and Bishnoi, 2020) and for the sake of graduates' marketability (Chiu et al., 2016). This talents cultivation programme is a unique educational mode that minimize the gap between expectations of students and industry requirements. The researchers further commented that the importance of internships and their strong influence in desire to stay in the hospitality industry, however, cannot be too firmly emphasized. Hospitality students rely on internships as to explore their future careers and this programme provided an opportunity for students to understand their working environment and further career path at early stage along with the skills, knowledge and competencies that are crucial for entry-level professionals in the hospitality industry. Thus, Covid-19 has a relationship to perception and employability rate and this supporting hypothesis 3 (H3).

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study illuminate important differences in perception and post Covid-19 outbreak, and its outcome affecting employability rate among the alumni of PMBS. The result shows that post Covid-19 outbreak moderating the relationship between perception and employability rate. The study is limited as its empirical analyses are conducted based on data gauged at a specific point of time due to the constraints in resources such as time factor. The results therefore were limited with regards to generalizations, and therefore are not a complete representation of the entire population and other industry players in hospitality industry. An additional research should be carried out in order to improve the current study and increase information and understanding on alumni perception and the employability rate by given this global pandemic issue. Prior to this, there is a need to develop a full understanding of how the alumni perceived the importance of soft skills provided by the learning institution as a way to enhance their career readiness.

Considering the little amount of research conducted in the field and numerous issues have not been address by this study, additional research should be carried out specifically in the field of global health pandemic, Covid-19. There might be an unobserved variable that future research needs to investigate. The aspect of sample size for an instance. The analysis derived from data collected did not represented the opinion of alumni from other polytechnic institution. Replication in other higher learning institution with different setting can be considered as to broaden the database for further generalizations. Besides, it will be best to conduct this study through the perspective of the organization so that future researcher would be able to garnered knowledge through the perspective of both alumni and the organization.

6. Conclusion

The study has combined three variable, namely perception, post Covid-19 and employability rate in one study. The results revealed that this study has achieved its objectives and answered all the research questions. Hypotheses were supported or otherwise were elaborated by the researcher. Furthermore, the element of post Covid-19 outbreak has a positive effect in the relationship between perception and employability rate.

Travel and tourism is among the most affected sectors caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. With the new norm that has been put into practice and working remotely is the option that help to content the spread of Covid-19, new set of technology related skills should be learned as this is the quality that organization sought for. This implied that higher learning institution can play a proactive role by exploring and incorporating the feedback from industry players into the curriculum in order to ensure the graduates are 'job ready' and the quality of graduates is of the highest level. It is with hope

that the finding of this study can be used as a basis to understand the industry players and their hiring intention.

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