

## Career Knowledge and Adaptability Influence Student's Career Choice: A Case of Pekan Community College



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**ABSTRACT:** A country's economic development is driven by the management of its human resources. And the continuity of human resources is backed by the choices of careers available in local industries. This study focuses on examining the career choice in the tourism industry among Pekan Community College students. The aim is to identify the factor influencing students' career choices in the tourism industry by measuring the intention to work in the tourism industry. The research method used in this study is quantitative with simple random sampling for 200 targeted respondents from Pekan Community College students. The data obtained from the survey were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The result obtained showed that the study is expected to provide a clear explanation of the factors that cause the occurrence of manpower shortage in the tourism industry. Career knowledge and adaptability has influenced the students' career choice. These two factors need to be provided to students to further strengthen their confidence in making career choices later.

**KEYWORDS:** Career choice, Job Decision, Tourism Sector, Graduates

### INTRODUCTION

A career can be simply described as a dream job of a student who has completed their lecture sessions (NS Azmi, 2018). The career choice made today will eventually reflect one's future life. It is an ongoing process beginning with a child's perception of the world of work and then developing into adolescence and early adulthood (Tolbert, 1974). High determination and commitment are the driving force of graduates to choose a desired career field. Meanwhile, career choice is an ongoing process that involves graduates in a series of jobs where it can contribute to personal development, especially in the field of employment being pursued. The right guidance can certainly help graduates pursue their career of choice which constitutes the dream, ambition and skills of each individual.

Nowadays, human beings are generally measured by their employment and economic status. This is evidenced by Salehudin et al (2005) who stated that the circulation in the modern world is very challenging, making the field of employment very important to most people. In Malaysia's efforts towards a sustainably developed nation, various employment opportunities have emerged. Therefore, the selection of the right and balanced job is very much emphasized (M Ma'dan, MT Ismail, S Daud, 2020). According to Masriaini (2001), career choice prioritizes the factors of self-knowledge and knowledge of employment as indicators of career choice (Robert W. Lent & Steven D. Brown, 2020). Each job chosen by a graduate depends on the individual's own desires such as developing interests, seeking self-satisfaction, acquiring financial resources, cultivating sources of social support, building identity and self-esteem, and subsequently re-translating to religion, race and country. Indirectly, the decision on the right career choice for a graduate can lead to the improvement of the country's economy (Waqas Ahmed & Dr. Sohail Farooq, 2022).

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issue of career choice was expressed by Ngah et al. (2019) who stated that graduates who have just completed their studies will choose a job according to their preferences and choices that they feel are right with their field of study. He added that after three years, graduates will eventually realize that they don't need to choose a job immediately after graduation and can still look for a job. Meanwhile, Ali, Ismail, Tajuddin, & Suleiman (2016) found that fresh graduates failed to determine their field of specialization at the starting point of their careers. Graduates will also begin to choose jobs that have a high reputation in an attempt to increase their ability and self-satisfaction. The issue of not having high self-confidence to jump into the field of work was stated by Che Rus et, al. (2016) which will cause graduates to have a sense of inferiority and less confidence to enter the world of work.

Preliminary knowledge of skills and job specifications, also known as career knowledge, is very important for students to measure their right abilities before deciding to enter the job market (Rifat et al., 2019). Relatively weak career knowledge will lead students to make mistakes in choosing a job that suits them (Larson et al., 2014). Whereas, the career adaptability factor has a relationship

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with students' inability to determine career choices that coincide with the skills they have and are often wrong in making decisions. The career adaptability factor will encourage students to have an uneasy feeling about the options and abilities they have and sometimes will make them sensitive to negative stimuli, causing them to make the wrong initial decision and hence mistakes in choosing a career (Fiori et.al, 2015; Tien & Wang, 2017).

Aligned with that, career choices for graduates at Pekan Community College in the field of Tourism are seen to have an impact on them in making decisions. This is seen from the perception of those who are so worried about their career opportunities. Their career knowledge and adaptability become a sign of whether this factor plays a role in the issue of their career choice. Therefore, a study to find out the perception of these students was conducted to give the information to the institution to see to what extent students are prepared to choose a career in the tourism field. With that, the main objectives are to identify factors that are affecting tourism students' career choices at Pekan Community College. This research wants to determine the career knowledge and career adaptability that influence career choice among tourism students at Pekan Community College.

### **CAREER KNOWLEDGE**

Career knowledge refers to the understanding of a theory or concept about the career field. It could be either from formal or informal learning and real-life experiences (Pesch, 2014). It is an explicit perception of a career that includes strengths, abilities, character, feelings and self-motivation in achieving a desired career that is built personally or through individual professional experience. In the aspects of learning, Blotnicky, Odendaal, French and Joy (2018) stated that the level of career knowledge a student possesses will directly influence his or her intention to pursue a career in the future. Career knowledge occurs through information on careers. Students who are constantly trying to find information in solving problems that have or may arise in their careers will be able to develop their full potential and adapt to the working environment. The information gathered will in turn become his or her career knowledge. Other than that, the other factor of career knowledge is vocational aspects. It refers to understanding and mastering the competency of work skills, which includes both theoretical and practical components and is heavily reliant on work practice in the industry (Draaismaa, Meijersb & Kuijpersa, 2017). This is a significant aspect in preparing students before entering a real-working environment. In other words, career knowledge serves as a factor in strengthening soft skills and hard skills which enable students to develop their ability in career planning. As a result, they may decide to pursue a career in the technical or vocational field (Martaningsih, 2018).

### **CAREER ADAPTABILITY**

Adaptability is known as self-regulation. It is a psychosocial resource that defines adaptive techniques and behaviours when attempting to achieve goals (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). On the other hand, career adaptability refers to the ability to adjust to changes in the workplace (Kadir & Deniz, 2016). According to Yang, Feng, Meng, & Qiu (2019), career adaptability is a branch of social psychology concerned with an individual's source of strength in coping with job needs and wants, self-change, and the current consequences and expectations of an individual's role in the workplace that will affect social integration for the better or worse. On the other hand, from the aspect of employment, adaptability refers to the ability of an individual to deal with the demands of job changes, job transitions and current and future challenges in his or her career (Chen, Fang, Liu, Pang, Wen, & Chen, 2020). Students that are prone to positive emotions will value their work environment more (Ismail, 2017). As a result, they will be more content in their jobs. In contrast, students who experience and hold negative emotions while working will feel uncomfortable and susceptible to negative stimuli, resulting in lower job satisfaction and more stress at work (Norris, 2016; Ismail, 2017). It is clear that career adaptability must be present in students during the career selection process in order to boost their enthusiasm to work in their chosen field.

### **CAREER CHOICE**

Career choice is described as the process of selecting a career path from a variety of educational and training options for a future career (Mahmud et al., 2016). It is a method of identifying a person's job-related activities, positions, and responsibilities that are relevant to his or her life (Tadele & Terefe, 2018).

The career path chosen by the student will determine the direction of his or her life (Saleh & Rosli, 2019). Students must learn about and immerse themselves in the work environment they may pursue later before deciding on a career path (Crawford & Turvey, 2019). This is due to rapid changes in the labour market, as well as the supply and demand of workers, causing an area of employment to become overly complex. Influential factors such as interest in the profession, academic competence, current situation, economic stability, and influence from other parties such as parents, friends, and others can play a role in determining a career path (Berger, Giacalone, Barlow, Kapadia, & Keith, 2017; Saleh & Rosli, 2019).

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## METHODOLOGY

A causal research design was employed since the primary purpose was to identify variables that might influence career choice. The correlation method permits the researcher to investigate the interaction among a wider audience of variables in a single study (Igwenagu, 2016). Apart from that, this study was implemented cross-sectionally in which all study variables were calculated at the same point of time. The questionnaire was distributed to the study respondents to gain an understanding of the relationship between the students' perceptions and their career choice. The population is tourism students in the Pekan Community College comprising 300 students. The sample is from a subgroup of the population consisting of 200 students from the Pekan Community College adventure tourism. Samples are selected based on a simple random sampling method.

Respondents are required to state their level of agreement or disagreement with the questions posed. Respondents' perceptions in this section are measured by using a Likert scale to reflect the respondents' views on a statement. This Likert scale contains five answer values and a set of responses to respondents' views between the values of 1 to 5. The data obtained from the questionnaire instrument were tested through the statistical analysis package SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science Version 23). The reliability test was conducted to determine the stability of the instrument used.

No	Variable	No. of item	Alpha
1	Career Knowledge	13	.948
2	Career Adaptability	14	.962
3	Career Choice	10	.961
	Total	37	.981

Based on Table 1, reliability analysis results show that Cronbach's Alpha value for each variable is high at 0.948 to 0.981. This indicates that the instrument is highly reliable and suitable to be used to determine the relationship between career knowledge and career adaptability with career choice among Pekan Community College Tourism students.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In order to test the research objective to identify whether there is any relationship between career knowledge and career adaptability towards career choice among the students of Pekan Community College in the tourism industry, the Spearman Rho correlation was employed to categorize the index of research at an ordinal scale due to abnormality in the data distribution which is a non-parametric correlation test. This test is to identify whether there is a relationship between variables career knowledge and career adaptability and variable career choice. Besides that, this test also determines the level of relationship strength between these two variables.

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between Career Knowledge and Career Choice in the tourism industry among students of Pekan Community College

**H2:** There is a significant relationship between Career Adaptability and Career Choice in the tourism industry among students of Pekan Community College

The analysis showed that the variables of Career Knowledge and Career Adaptability are capable to influence the variable career choice. This can be indicated by the p-value towards these two elements which are career knowledge ( $p = 0.000$ ) and Career Adaptability ( $p = 0.000$ ). Based on that two-element output, the p-value shows a smaller number than 0.05 which is 0.000. Therefore, the data reflected that there is a significant relationship between the two variables and career choice in the tourism industry.

**Table 2. Spearman Rho Correlation Test between career knowledge and career adaptability to the career choice in the tourism industry**

Correlations					
			Career Adaptability	Career Choice	Career Knowledge
Spearman's rho	Career Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.862**	.862**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
		N	100	100	100
	Career Choice	Correlation Coefficient	.862**	1.000	.824**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
		N	100	100	100
	Career Knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	.862**	.824**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
		N	100	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Table 3 shows the value to identify the correlation strength level ( $r$ ) between career knowledge and career adaptability to the career choice in the tourism industry. The value for correlation for elements in the variables career knowledge and career adaptability showed a positive value. The correlation coefficient value of career choice in the tourism industry to career knowledge is 0.824. This indicates a high and strong relationship. Therefore, the element of career knowledge has a strong and positive relation to career choice in the tourism industry. While the correlation coefficient value of career choice in the tourism industry to career adaptability is 0.862. This also indicates a strong and high relation for this element; career adaptability has a positive and strong relation to career choice in the tourism industry. In total, the analysis result for the correlation test between the variable in career choice with the two elements is positive. These two factors are capable to influence the students of Pekan Community College to make a career choice in the tourism industry. Therefore, the hypothesis testing for this research is acceptable.

**Table 3. Rowntree Scale for correlation coefficient ( $r$ )**

Correlation coefficient value ( $r$ )	Relation strength
0.9 to 1.0	Really strong, Really high
0.7 to 0.89	High, Strong
0.4 to 0.69	Intermediate
0.2 to 0.39	Weak, Low
0.0 to 0.19	Really Low, Really Weak

### RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the factors of career knowledge and career adaptability with the career choice of students in the field of tourism, both directly and indirectly. This objective is based on the problem scenario that arises in the tourism hospitality industry, where many have struggles in choosing a career. Career Knowledge and Career Adaptability factors are believed to play a role for students in their career choice based on the field they have entered involving final-year tourism program students from Pekan Community College as respondents.

The relationship between career knowledge shows a strong positive relationship with Pekan Community College students' career choices in the tourism field. This is in line with the recommendations from the study by Blotnick, Odendaal, French, and Joy (2018) which stated that the level of career knowledge a student possesses will directly influence his or her intention to pursue a career in the future.

Career adaptability strongly influences Pekan Community College students' career choices in the field of tourism. This coincides with the findings of Ismail's (2017) study which asserts that students are prone to positive emotions causing them to value their working environment more.

Pekan Community College can play a very important role in producing quality human capital and having a strong identity by implementing several approaches to graduates. The concept of industry on campus can be applied in today's learning that emphasizes the application of industry in real-time learning. The development of first-class human capital for students is very important and needs to be emphasized in order to produce future employees who are confident, knowledgeable, disciplined, dedicated, resilient and trustworthy (Mansor & Kasim, 2008). The industry will be able to identify the challenges and elements that impact a potential employee's decision to take a position as part of their role to develop the country's human resources. Through the application of culture and work specifications, industrial application training will produce potentially competent future workers while reducing training effort since they have been taught during teaching and learning.

In conclusion, the findings of the study are expected to provide a clear explanation of one of the factors that cause worker shortage occurrences in the tourism industry. If this awareness is not taken care of, then the industry or the government will always face an issue regarding the insufficiency of semi-skilled energy resources in the field of tourism. The institution needs to be more committed to providing and preparing students with skills that not only involve external skills but also internal skills. This matter is important to produce graduates who have high technical skills with first-class human capital characteristics.

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