E S T E E M

JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Volume 6, No. 1, April 2022

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Journal Description

Introduced in 2017, ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities is an official journal of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Pulau Pinang with a registered e-ISSN 2600-7274. It is an open-access journal that publishes articles in English and Bahasa Malaysia. Initially, it was published once a year, from January 2017 to December 2020, but changed its publication frequency to twice a year starting January 2021 to accommodate the increasing number of manuscript submissions. The journal adheres to traditional standards of double-blind peer review with an average acceptance rate of 30%. Currently, the journal does not charge any article processing fees for manuscripts submitted personally or collaboratively by authors.

Aim and Scope

The ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities aims to serve as a platform for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to exchange new knowledge and ideas in social sciences and humanities areas. The journal provides an avenue for scholars and practitioners to document unpublished, original manuscripts related to emerging issues, developments, and trends that examine how people interact, integrate, behave and influence the world around them. Specifically, the journal aims to provide new knowledge on the relationships between individuals and societies and the operation and progression of organizations in the 21st century.

The key topics covered in the journal relate to emerging issues, trends, and challenges that shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors across societies, businesses, industries, and governments worldwide. As the journal covers two separate but interrelated areas of social sciences and humanities, authors are welcomed to submit manuscripts that systematically investigate questions around humanities development, namely language, linguistics, culture, arts, religion, health, and wellbeing. For social sciences, the journal invites manuscripts related to human psychology and sociology in education, law, political science, business, and hospitality, among others.

Frequency of Publication

- January 2021 to present: ONE (1) volume TWO (2) issues per year, published in April and September.
- January 2017 to December 2020: ONE (1) volume ONE (1) issue per year, published in November.
- The publication frequency of the journal does not include special issues.

Duration of Publication Process

The publication process takes approximately 90 – 120 days, based on current practice. All manuscripts are processed accordingly:

- Review Process (within 30 days after the closing date)
- Notification of Acceptance (within 10 days after the review process)
- Revision (within 30 days after the manuscript acceptance)
- Copy Editing (within 10 days after final revision)
- Publication (within 10 days after the copy-editing process)

Peer Review Process

ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities relies on effective peer review processes to uphold the quality and validity of individual articles and the overall integrity of the journal. The journal practices a double-blind peer review consisting of a minimum of two peer reviewers per manuscript to maintain the quality. All reviewers with diverse expertise serve voluntarily. Throughout the double-blind review process, the editors hide both reviewer and author identities from one another. To facilitate this, the editors need to ensure that the manuscripts are processed in a way that does not give away the identity of their authors. The editors make sure that the manuscript does not include the names or affiliations of the authors. This ensures the manuscript is judged fairly, keeping bias out of the equation. Both authors and reviewers also benefit from some degree of protection against criticism.

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Anderson Ngelambong

EDITORIAL NOTE

On behalf of the ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (EJSSH) Editorial Team, I am pleased to present Volume 6, Issue No. 1, April 2022. We have received 61 manuscripts for this issue, primarily from Malaysian scholars. A total of 13 manuscripts were accepted for publication after the stringent review process, representing a 21% acceptance rate. At the end of multiple series of the review process, only eight manuscripts were successfully published.

This issue covered emerging issues, trends, and challenges in social sciences and humanities. Two papers are about improving online distance learning through gamification and enhancing students' readiness. Both papers concluded that a concerted effort among higher learning institution stakeholders is essential in sustaining the viability of online distance learning in the long term. One research looked at the perceptions of hospitality and tourism students on employability anxiety and career intention pre and post-COVID-19. Another looked at the attributes affecting quick-service restaurants' revisit intention among students. Interestingly, one paper evaluated the performance of waqf land development in Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. Several other manuscripts focused on research topics concerning how business practices and strategies affect consumers' behavioral intentions.

For the following September 2022 issue, we hope to get better-quality manuscripts from international scholars. We welcome collaborative-based papers that celebrate intellectual diversity in social sciences and humanities fields across countries, regions, and continents. They are much appreciated and will make a significant contribution to the sustainability of this journal. Also, we would like to receive more papers that focus on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. To conclude, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all contributors, authors, reviewers, and Editorial Team members, whose concerted efforts have made this issue possible. We hope you enjoy reading the fruits of our labor. We welcome any constructive feedback and comments towards the betterment of the journal. Together, we make it great.

Editor-in-Chief

Anderson Ngelambong, Ph.D.
ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities
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Employability Anxiety and Career Intention among Hospitality and Tourism Management Students: A Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Comparison Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has left the tourism industry with severe joblessness which affect hospitality and tourism management students. Based on gaps in the literature, the study examines the effects of COVID-19 on hospitality and tourism management students by examining the potential changes in their employability anxiety and career intention before and after the pandemic. It employed a quantitative retrospective pretest-posttest (RPP) research design. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from the chosen clusters of target respondent. Frequencies and a paired-samples t-test were used to analyze data from the 409 responses collected. Eta squared was used to calculate the effect size of the changes before and after COVID-19. Key findings suggest COVID-19 has increased the students' anxiety about securing a job in the industry and made them less inclined to pursue a tourism career after graduation. Tourism's vulnerability primarily drives their employability anxiety to external forces and perceived incompetence. The study concludes with suggestions to lower the students' employability anxiety, increase their intention to work in the industry, and restore their trust and confidence in tourism's job-creating ability and economic benefits, such as tourism resilience reassurance, the collaboration between academics and industry practitioners in post-COVID-19 tourism curriculum design, and the government's initiative to re-open tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of tourism in job creation is indisputable, given its labour-intensive nature and the significant multiplier effect on employment in related sectors. According to UNWTO's (2019) estimate, one job in the primary tourism sector created about one-and-a-half indirect jobs in the tourism-related economy. In 2019, the industry generated one in ten jobs globally (UNWTO, 2019), accounting for 334 million jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2021). However, the COVID-19 changed the tourism industry dramatically. Sixty-two million tourism jobs were lost globally in 2020, and the threat of more job losses looms large (WTTC, 2021). Tourism's current state of joblessness may create or heighten the employability anxiety of hospitality and tourism management (HTM) students. Current students may want to quit or withdraw from their current HTM programmes because of the uncertainty and pursue another major that is considered more secure in employment. The situation may also dissuade HTM students from pursuing a career in the industry. Moreover, the considerable unemployment plaguing the tourism industry may discourage potential students from enrolling in a HTM programme, thus reducing college and university admissions.

If the above scenarios materialize, the long-run effects on tourism can be devastating. HTM students play an essential role in the entire tourism ecosystem because they are the backbone of the professionally trained and qualified human resources required by tourism businesses (Hjalager & Andersen, 2001; Lo, 2005; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020). As a service industry, tourism needs well-trained and qualified employees capable of consistently delivering excellent customer service, which is the cornerstone of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Jiang & Tribe, 2009; Unguren, Kacmaz & Kahveci, 2015). HTM students can well fulfil this industry's human resource need. The imperative function of HTM students in the entire tourism ecosystem cannot be overlooked. However, the current joblessness state of tourism caused by COVID-19 leaves us with a troubling question as to how the situation may have affected HTM students. Are they overwhelmed with anxiety about graduating with an HTM degree but unable to secure a job in the industry? Will this anxiety cause them to steer clear of tourism careers and pursue something that is less susceptible to unforeseen circumstances? Have they lost confidence and trust in the industry's job-creating ability and economic benefit?

When it comes to COVID-19 and tourism research, there is a dearth of studies conducted to examine the impacts of COVID-19 on HTM education (Tiwari et al., 2020; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020; Seraphin & Yallop, 2021; Ye & Law, 2021). Several researchers who have investigated tourism education within the context of COVID-19, such as Baum and Hai (2020), Bilsland et al. (2020), Tiwari et al. (2020), Unguren and Huseyinli (2020), Seraphin and Yallop (2021), and Ye and Law (2021), have emphasized the need to explore the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education because research in the area is underrepresented. Given the severe joblessness effect of COVID-19 on tourism, this study seeks to examine the potential changes in HTM students' employability anxiety and career intention before and after the pandemic. The study contributes to the scant literature related to COVID-19's impact on HTM students and imparts an understanding of how the present joblessness state in the industry has affected HTM students' employability anxiety and career plans. With that, practical suggestions can be made to tourism educators, the industry, and the government on the pathway forward for tourism education post-COVID-19. The paper is presented in the following manner: literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism Employment

Human capital is one of the most important capitals for tourism. People are an inherent nature of the industry (UNWTO, 2014) – visitors, employees, suppliers/businesses, local people, and governments (Cook et al., 2018). Many tourism products and services are about people and involve people, either as part of attractions and entertainment or as an integral part of the expertise offered to ensure effective operation and further development of the industry (UNWTO, 2014). A high-quality skilled workforce is of absolute importance to tourism. It is needed to ensure the delivery and quality of tourism products and services (UNWTO, 2014). It also provides greater competitiveness and innovation, improves job prospects, and eases the adjustment process in changing markets (UNWTO, 2014). Tourism education can create a high-quality skilled workforce by properly equipping students with courses and skills to become professionally trained employees who possess talents across skill levels for the industry (Hjalager & Andersen, 2001; Lo, 2005, Kunwar, 2018; Tiwari et al., 2021).

Tourism's employment benefits are widely recognized. Between 2014 and 2019, the industry created 1 in 4 net new jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2021). In 2019, the sector accounted for 334 million jobs, meaning 10.6% of all jobs (WTTC, 2021). The industry's job-creating power is one of the top reasons students choose a HTM major. Huyton (1997) reported Chinese students pursued a HTM program because they were motivated by the belief that the hospitality and tourism industry provided more job opportunities. Lee et al. (2006) discovered that job opportunity was the second most crucial factor driving Hong Kong students to pursue a degree in HTM. American students enrolled in a HTM major had the same result (Lee et al., 2014). Alas, COVID-19 may have painted a dark and uncertain state for the prospect of employment in tourism. In 2020, only 272 million people were employed across the industry worldwide, representing a loss of 62 million jobs or a decrease of 18.5% compared to 2019's figures (WTTC, 2021). Moreover, millions of the remaining jobs could be lost without the full recovery of the industry (WTTC, 2021).

As HTM students are part of the entire tourism ecosystem, they may have been directly and indirectly impacted by COVID-19. Employability anxiety may be one area of significant concern. One factor often cited as a contributor to HTM students' employability anxiety is the industry's structural characteristics that make it vulnerable to external factors (e.g., pandemics, natural catastrophes, man-made disasters, financial crises). Tourism vulnerability can result in unwanted impacts such as job losses and an uncertain future (Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020). Thus, COVID-19 could have intensified HTM students' perceived job insecurity and limited career opportunities in tourism (Baum & Hai, 2020). The other two common factors are perceived incompetence, which is associated with the feeling that the skills and knowledge gained from college/university do not meet the requirements and expectations of the industry (Tahmassian & Jalali-Moghadam, 2011; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020), and personal attributes that are often experienced by students who do not choose an HTM program willingly and knowingly (Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020).

2.2 Research Gap

Although there is quite a vast number of studies analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, research on the pandemic's effect on HTM education remains scarce (Bau, & Hai, 2020; Tiwari et al., 2020; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020; Seraphin & Yallop, 2021; Ye & Law, 2021). In a search on research articles associated with the impact of COVID-19 on HTM

education via Google Scholar using such keywords as tourism students, tourism education and COVID-19, only 10 out of the 100 analyzed articles were directly related to HTM education and COVID-19. These articles only focused on several areas: 1) the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on HTM educators and students, such as graduate employability, educators' engagement, students' hope, academic satisfaction and loyalty intention (Sato et al., 2021; Ye & Law, 2021; Zhong et al., 2021; Lei & So, 2021), 2) the changes brought by COVID-19 to tourism education such as the use of technology to support and facilitate online tourism education (Qiu et al., 2020), virtual training and internships (Bilsland et al., 2020; Park & Jones, 2021) and tourism skills and knowledge deemed vital after COVID-19 (Tiwari et al., 2020; Sato et al., 2021), and 3) the future of tourism academia (Edelheim, 2020; Wassler & Fan, 2021).

Even before COVID-19, research on HTM education lacks acknowledgment (Baum et al., 2016; Tiwari et al., 2020). Ballantyne et al. (2009) highlighted that research on tourism education and training represented only 2% of the 21 tourism research articles they analyzed. Research has been predominantly related to pedagogy within tourism education, focusing on curriculum issues (Fidgeon, 2010). Thus, several researchers have emphasized a need to close the gap in the literature (Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020; Tiwari et al., 2020; Bilsland et al., 2020). By focusing on HTM students' employment anxiety and career intention within the context of COVID-19, the current study specifically responds to the calls of Unguren and Huseyinli (2020) to conduct empirical research on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism education and HTM students' career plan, and of Tiwari et al. (2020) to examine HTM students' feedback on the effects of COVID-19 on their career.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The current study employed a quantitative retrospective pretest-posttest (RPP) design. It collected quantifiable data on pre-and post-COVID-19 employability anxiety and career intention and performed statistical tests on these data. Using RPP, the study attempted to gauge the degree of change in tourism students' employability anxiety and career intention before and after COVID-19. RPP design was used instead of the traditional pretest-posttest (TPP) model because of the latter design's significant limitations in capturing change (lack of self-awareness at pretest, socially desirable responding, retest effects, and test reactivity). The RPP model has been recommended as an alternative to reduce response shift bias and capture actual change effects, especially when measuring noncognitive constructs such as beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and skills (Moore & Tananis, 2009; Little et al., 2019). Using the RPP method, respondents were not given a pretest (before COVID-19). They answered the online questionnaire only during the post-test period (after COVID-19), during which they were requested to report their employability anxiety and career intention, at the same time, retrospectively think back to the time before the pandemic about their anxiety level to secure a job in tourism and their plan to work in the industry after graduation.

3.2 Sampling Design

The study solely involved hospitality and tourism higher learning institutions in Sabah due to Malaysia's large HTM student population (according to IDP Connect (2021), about 43 colleges and universities offer HTM programmes in the country). Due to the large target population, cluster sampling was used to select the sample. HTM students across hospitality and tourism higher learning institutions in Sabah were divided into several clusters based on several identifiable characteristics, including location, types of institutions (universities and colleges),

types of programmes (tourism management), and program level (Diploma). Based on these characteristics, the sample is composed of students majoring in Diploma in Tourism Management at eight universities and colleges, namely Almacrest International College, Asian Tourism International College (ATIC), Cosmopoint College, Geomatika College, Kinabalu Commercial College (KCC), MSU College Sabah, University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF), and Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah (UiTM Sabah). A total of 409 undergraduate tourism students from the selected higher learning institutions participated in the online survey.

3.3 Survey Instrument

An online questionnaire was employed due to the COVID-19-related movement restrictions imposed by the government and the fact that students were doing online and distant classes. It consisted of three sections, namely Section A examined the respondents' employability anxiety and career intention before COVID-19, Section B asked about the respondents' demographic profile and program enrolment information, and Section C included the same items as in Section A, but they measured employability anxiety and career intention after COVID-19. The measurement items included in the questionnaire were primarily adapted from several prior studies that explored tourism students' attitudes toward tourism careers and employability anxiety, such as Jiang and Tribe (2009), Richardson (2009), Richardson and Butler (2012), Wu et al. (2014) and Unguren and Huseyinli (2020).

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The study used an online questionnaire created using Google Forms to collect data. The data were collected between February 2021 and May 2021. The program coordinators at the chosen eight universities and colleges were contacted via email with a request to share the online questionnaire with their students enrolled in Diploma in Tourism Management. Two successive emails were sent to the program coordinators in April 2021 to obtain more respondents. Using the RPP method, the respondents self-assessed their employability anxiety and career intention after COVID-19 and retrospectively reflected on their employability and career plans before COVID-19.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Respondents' Profile and Program Enrolment

The respondents' profile and program enrolment information are presented in Table 1. Gender distribution was 75% female and the remaining 25% male. There might be significantly more female than male respondents because of the general trend of more female than male students in colleges and universities in Malaysia. The number of male students has declined steadily since 2016, and in 2020, female students outnumbered male students by 81% (Hirschmann, 2022). The response rates of the chosen eight institutions were as follows: Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah (28.9%), Asian Tourism International College (17.1%), University College Sabah Foundation (15.4%), Almacrest International College (14.7%), Kinabalu Commercial College (10.5%), Cosmopoint College (7.8%), MSU College Sabah (4.4%) and Geomatika College (1.2%). 32.5% of the respondents were in their first year of study, 47.7% in their second year, and the remaining 19.8% were in their final year. Generally, HTM degrees in Malaysia will take 2 to 2.5 years to complete. A handful of the respondents were in semester six or above because they extended the duration of their study because of taking a semester off, repeating and deferring specific courses. The HTM program was a top choice for 70% of the respondents (meaning they chose it willingly and knowingly). The remaining 30% enrolled in the program

unwillingly and did not know what to expect. Respondents who pursued HTM voluntarily and knowingly indicated the following top five reasons for their pursuit: social and cultural interaction opportunities (64.8%), job opportunities (57.9%), international career and mobility opportunities (53.1%), interest (36.9%), and versatile skills and knowledge (32.8%).

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

Socio-demographic Characteristic		Percentage
Gender	Female	74.8%
	Male	25.2%
Institution	UiTM Sabah	28.9%
	ATIC	17.1%
	UCSF	15.4%
	Almacrest	14.7%
	KCC	10.5%
	Cosmopoint	7.8%
	MSU Sabah	4.4%
	Geomatika	1.2%
Current semester	1 and 2	32.5%
	3 and 4	47.7%
	5 and above	19.8%
The decision to enrol in the HTM program	Chose willingly & knowingly; top choice	69.2%
	Didn't choose willingly & knowingly; what was offered	30.8%
Top reasons for enrolling in the HTM program	Social & cultural interaction	64.8%
	Attractive job opportunities	57.9%
	International career/movement opportunities	53.1%
	Interest	36.9%
	Adaptable tourism skills	32.8%
	Plan to start a tourism business	18.3%
	An alternative career in tourism	14.2%
	Some tourism work experience	6.6%

4.2 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. Frequencies were obtained to analyze the respondents' demographic and program enrolment data. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the respondents' employment anxiety and career intention before and after COVID-19. The test is appropriate and used when the sample involves only one group and when data are collected on two different occasions or under other circumstances (Palllant, 2016). To measure the magnitude of COVID-19's effect on the respondents' employability anxiety and career intention before and after COVID-19, eta squared (η^2) was used to calculate the effect size using the formula below (Pallant, 2016):

$$\eta^2 = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + N - 1}$$

To interpret the eta squared values, the researcher referred to Cohen's (1988) guidelines where 0.01 = small effect, 0.06 = moderate effect, 0.14 = large effect.

4.3 Reliability Test

A scale reliability test was performed on the pre- and post-COVID-19 scale items. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for pre-pandemic and post-pandemic items are 0.762 and 0.755, respectively, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability for the scale within the chosen sample (Pallant, 2016).

Table 2. Scale Reliability Test

Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Pre-COVID-19 employability anxiety and career intention	0.762	13
Post-COVID-19 employability anxiety and career intention	0.755	13

4.4 Comparisons Between Before and After COVID-19

The results of the comparisons between the respondents' employability anxiety and career intention before and after COVID-19 are presented in Table 3. There was a statistically significant increase in the sample's employability anxiety post-COVID-19 [M=3.98, SD=.929, t(408)=-6.61, p<.05] compared to pre-COVID-19 (M=3.59, SD=.909), with η2 value of 0.10 (moderate effect). Furthermore, after COVID-19, the sample's confidence in getting a job in tourism after graduation statistically decreased [M=3.02, SD=.911, t(408)=21.00, p<.05] compared to before COVID-19 (M=4.13, SD=.773), with η2 value of 0.52 (large effect).

Table 3. Comparisons between before and after COVID-19

Items	Before		After		t-value	df	P	η2
	M	SD	M	SD				
Employability anxiety[1]								
Anxiety level about getting a job in hospitality/tourism after graduation	3.59	0.909	3.98	0.929	-6.61	408	.000	0.10
Confidence in getting a job in hospitality/tourism after graduation	4.13	0.773	3.02	0.911	21.00	408	.000	0.52
Attributes of employability anxiety[1]								
Tourism vulnerability	3.06	1.007	3.77	1.022	-11.66	408	.000	0.25
Perceived incompetence	3.17	.961	3.68	0.981	-9.00	408	.000	0.17
Personal attributes	2.89	.983	3.42	1.014	-9.78	408	.000	0.19
Career intention[2]								
Plan to work after graduation	4.39	0.766	3.65	0.928	14.71	408	.000	0.35
See a bright future working in the hospitality/tourism industry	4.23	0.802	3.35	0.879	16.98	408	.000	0.41

[1]Measured on a scale of high/low level where 1 – very low and 5 – very high
[2]Measured on a scale of agreement where 1 – strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree
M= mean; SD = standard deviation; df = degree of freedom; P = significant level (2-tailed); η2 = eta squared value

The respondents were asked to assess the three factors commonly cited as contributors to HTM students' employability anxiety. Overall, there was a statistically significant increase in all the factors contributing to the respondents' employability anxiety, all with η2 values higher than 0.14 (large effect):

1. Perceived incompetence: (t[408]=-9.00, p<.05; M_{before}=3.17, SD=.961; M_{after}=3.68, SD=.981; η2=0.17).
2. Personal attributes: (t[408]=-9.78, p<.05; M_{before}=2.89, SD=.983; M_{after}=3.42, SD=1.014; η2=0.19).
3. Tourism vulnerability: (t[408]=-11.66, p<.05; M_{before}=3.06, SD=1.007; M_{after}=3.77, SD=1.022; η2=0.25).

The above results also implied that after COVID-19, tourism vulnerability was the most significant factor contributing to HTM students' employability anxiety, followed by perceived incompetence and personal attributes. Before COVID-19, the order was perceived as incompetence, tourism vulnerability, and personal attributes. In terms of career intention, there was a statistically significant decrease in the respondents' plan to work in tourism after graduation post-COVID-19 [M=3.65, SD=.928, t(408)=14.71, p<.05] compared to pre-COVID-19 (M=4.39, SD=.766), with η2 value of 0.35 (large effect). Furthermore, there was also a statistically significant decrease in the respondents' ability to envisage a bright future working in the industry after COVID-19 (M=3.35, SD=.879, t(408)=16.98, p<.05) compared to before COVID-19 (M=4.23, SD=.802), with *η2*=0.41 (large effect).

5. DISCUSSION

The results suggest that COVID-19 has increased HTM students' anxiety about securing a job in the industry and made them less inclined to pursue a tourism career after graduation. Higher employability anxiety and decreased career intention may indicate their faltering confidence and trust in tourism's employment-generating ability and economic benefit. HTM students' higher employability anxiety after COVID-19 is understandable. The pandemic has created a gloomy outlook and a hopeless state of joblessness for tourism. COVID-19 has raged for almost two years now, and it does not seem to be subsiding. The recent emergence of the Delta variant, which is much more transmissible than the Alpha variant and the original virus found in Wuhan, has caused a dramatic spike in COVID-19 infection rates around the globe. The entire situation causes so much uncertainty about the eventual end of the pandemic and paints an even bleaker future for tourism. The threat of job losses in the industry persists. Informal dialogues with many who previously worked in the tourism industry revealed that they are now doing utterly different work, such as farming, becoming an insurance agent, being involved in a delivery job, or running a small-scale business. The program coordinators at the chosen eight institutions have also mentioned the difficulty of their final-semester HTM students in securing a placement for industrial training. To illustrate, in the October 2020 – February 2021 semester, 40 out of the 136 final-semester HTM students at UiTM Sabah failed to secure industrial training placement at travel agencies, tour operators, tourist destinations, or other tourism-related companies. Before COVID-19, getting an industrial training placement was never an issue or a concern. This situation may cause HTM students to ask questions such as *"can I find a placement for my industrial training. Will I be employable in the industry after graduation?"*

Improving job prospects is one of the main reasons for attending university (Beaumont et al., 2016; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020). The results show that employment opportunity was a top reason for the respondents to pursue an HTM program, in line with the findings of some previous researchers such as Huyton (1997), Lee et al. (2006), and Lee et al. (2014). But, alas,

for as long as COVID-19 still rages, job prospects for HTM students remain bleak. The sombre future of tourism employment is expected to prolong after the pandemic is over. This is because COVID-19 has had devastating effects on international tourism that the industry went back to levels 30 years ago, and a return to pre-pandemic levels could take 2.5 to 4 years (UNWTO, 2020). Naturally, the current state of joblessness in tourism and higher employability anxiety may cause HTM students to pursue a career outside the industry after graduation. The results indicate that tourism vulnerability is the main factor contributing to HTM students' employability anxiety. It is an inherent characteristic of tourism to be susceptible to external forces such as crises and disasters, making employment in the industry perceived as less permanent or less stable than in non-service industries. This inherent characteristic can turn the industry upside down, stripping it of its positive capabilities, as evidenced by COVID-19. Therefore, it is a risk that needs to be understood and accepted by HTM students and tourism employees. HTM students who are risk-averse may become so discouraged by tourism's vulnerability to COVID-19 that they may decide to steer clear of tourism jobs after they graduate and pursue a career in an industry that has a reputation for being stable and secure.

COVID-19 has also intensified HTM students' sense that the knowledge and skills they are getting from the university are not sufficient or not compatible with the expectations and requirements of the industry. The pandemic has forced a sudden shift from face-to-face learning to online and distance learning, thus changing how assessments are structured and graded and reducing students' engagement with lecturers and classmates. The transition may result in an overall sense that the quality of education is less than the pre-pandemic educational standard. For HTM students specifically, the feeling of getting a reduced quality of the tourism degree they are pursuing may be attributable to their deprived opportunities to engage in experiential learning activities that are inherent in HTM programmes, such as hands-on training in the use of industry-specific systems, field trips, and professional training.

Since HTM students play an essential role in providing professionally trained and qualified human resources required by the industry, the study highlights an urgent need to lower their employability anxiety, increase their intention to work in the industry, and restore their trust and confidence in tourism' job-creating ability and economic benefit. One way of doing so may be for HTM educators to instill a profound understanding and confidence in students that while tourism is susceptible to external factors, it is also highly resilient. Throughout the history of tourism, the industry has been affected by crises and disasters time and again (SARS in 2002, a tsunami in 2004, a bird flu outbreak in 2009, a global economic crisis in 2009, MERS in 2012, Ebola in 2013-14, Zika outbreaks in 2016). Yet, in all cases, tourism bounced back, even improved to become more resilient. Presentation of such information to HTM students may help inject a dose of trust and confidence in tourism's resilience and its enormous employment-generating ability.

COVID-19 has most likely changed tourism in specific ways. Changes in the industry call for changes in tourism education so that there is compatibility between what tourism education provides and what the tourism industry requires. Academics and industry practitioners have worked together in tourism curriculum design before COVID-19. After the pandemic, there is an urgent need for academics and industry practitioners to sit down again and discuss how the pandemic has changed the industry and reflect those changes in the tourism curriculum so that the future of the entire tourism ecosystem will be safer, more resilient and more sustainable. Tiwari et al. (2020) discovered that from tourism academics' perspective, COVID-19 had emphasized a change in tourism academic course structure where students are taught the skills related to crisis management, risk management, health and safety measures in tourism, business continuity, and tourism resilience. The industrial perspective on the skills and knowledge to be

prioritized after COVID-19 should also be sought. A tourism curriculum designed from the views of academics and industry practitioners can increase HTM students' perceived competence.

The Malaysian government is gradually reopening the tourism sector. Although such a move might seem unwise due to the risk of virus transmission, the tourism sector cannot be shut down until there are no more infection cases. International tourism may be off the table, but domestic tourism can be progressively re-opened with precautionary measures. The Malaysian government can re-start domestic tourism by creating safe travel bubbles within the country. Moreover, proactive safety measures such as mandatory mask-wearing, frequent sanitization, limiting operational capacity, and allowing only those with complete vaccines to travel should be enforced. The reopening of domestic tourism is essential to rebuilding the tourism economy to creating employment opportunities in the tourism industry.

6. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on HTM students by examining potential changes in their employability anxiety and career intention before and after the pandemic. The findings suggest that COVID-19 has increased HTM students' anxiety about securing a job in the industry and made them less inclined to pursue a tourism career after graduation. HTM students' employability anxiety is primarily driven by tourism's structural characteristics that make it susceptible to external forces such as COVID-19 and the students' perceived incompetence attributable to the shift from face-to-face learning to online and distance learning. The findings call for an urgent need to take measures to lower HTM students' employability anxiety, increase their intention to work in the industry after graduation, and restore their trust and confidence in tourism's job-creating ability and economic benefits, such as tourism resilience reassurance, a collaboration between academicians and industry practitioners in tourism curriculum design post-COVID-19, and the government's initiative to re-open tourism.

The study is not without limitations. The RPP research approach can raise insufficient recall and the potential for fabricated or biased responses. To minimize the issue, pre-COVID-19 questions constituted the first section of the questionnaire (Section A) and the post-COVID-19 items in the last section (Section C), with an additional section (Section B) placed in between to create some sense of time or space between before and after COVID-19 in the same questionnaire. Moreover, the order of questions in Section A and Section C was reshuffled, and the questions were phrased differently but still held the same meaning or intention. Also, using an online questionnaire may discriminate against students with a poor Internet connection, thus, are unable to access the survey. Internet problem is quite common in Sabah, particularly in remote areas. There is still much to be investigated in tourism education and COVID-19. Future studies are encouraged to conduct a thorough examination of the essential academic courses taught to HTM students post-COVID-19 from the perspectives of academics and industry practitioners. Such analysis is needed in designing a proper tourism curriculum. This ensures that tourism education is aligned with the current need of the tourism industry.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The single author wrote the paper and did all the work, from questionnaire design to data collection, and data analysis using SPSS. She wrote all the sections that constitute the entire article (i.e., Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, Conclusion and Implications, and References).

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Survey Instrument

Variable	Items/Questions
Career Intention	Planned to work in the tourism/hospitality industry after graduation.
	Could see bright future in the tourism/hospitality industry.
Employability Anxiety	Confidence in working in tourism/hospitality industry.
	Anxiety about getting a job in the tourism/hospitality industry after graduation.
Attributes of Employability Anxiety	Feeling of incompetence.
	Personal attributes
	Structural characteristics of tourism/hospitality industry

Note: The same items were asked to measure students' perceptions before and after COVID-19

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The Impact of Government Debt on Malaysia's Economic Growth

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysian economic situation has not been improving since the 2010 world economic crisis. The vulnerability of Malaysia government to accumulating high debt is rather worrisome. This study attempts to identify the factors affecting Malaysia's economic growth; namely foreign debt, domestic debt, labor force, trade openness and savings as independent variables and to identify the existence of a bi-directional relationship between economic growth and government debt. Annual time series data over the period from 1987 to 2017 was analyzed using the Dynamic Ordinary Least Square approach. It was found that domestic debt has a positive and significant impact on economic growth. On the other hand, foreign debt has a negative and significant effect on economic growth. Other than that, there is no existence of a bi-directional relationship between economic growth and government debt. This study provides insights for policymakers and investors about the importance of better and quality debt management. Theoretically, it provides a fresh view of the literature that will promote more empirical research in the future. Future studies should extend the current study by considering other key factors that might significantly influence the level of economic growth.

1. INTRODUCTION

For a nation to be developed, one of the common ways undertaken by the government is through debt or borrowings; also known as public debt or sovereign debt. Debt is a vital tool for a government in a country that would generate productivity and boost the economy. Government debt is defined as what a government borrows to make sure it can fund all its planned expenditures. In normal circumstances, the government will borrow money by supplying and issuing bonds or other securities. Amongst the economists, they would agree to say that certain government debt is not evil. For instance, during an economic downturn or even a recession where tax revenue decreases, money is needed by a government to save jobs and businesses. Then, a deficit is inevitable. A fiscal deficit, as scary as it may sound, is not so bad during good economic growth, is rewarded with a surplus. Hence, it balances out the government budget in the long run. According to Christen and Soguel (2019), higher debt can give an advantage to a government. They further state that when a decrease in the price of the borrowed capital is lower, then, there is the return rate in the capital markets. The government can benefit from this by issuing bonds and making investments using the gained capital on the capital market.

Why does the government borrow, one might ask? A borrowing is deemed more attractive to politicians to raise money rather than collecting more taxes. The purpose of borrowing varies from combating recession to public sector investment, war, and even political pressure since it is simply cheap to borrow. Furthermore, Daud (2016) argues that when the government debt rises to finance infrastructure investment, economic growth in a country will also increase because borrowing will help the rising of the supply side of the economy and enable higher economic growth. There will be higher tax revenues to pay back the debt if the growth is recovered, where the federal government debt accumulation gives a positive impact on the economic growth.

On the other hand, borrowing could lead a country to the bad side of government debt. For example, a competition between government bonds and corporate bonds for who can better attract investors causes interest rates to go higher. Whether the government or private sector should get more would just make one party would receive fewer investors' money than the other. But a great borrowing could create vulnerabilities as proven in the past. A country is more prone to a bad financial crisis if its debt-to-GDP ratio surpasses a certain level (Reinhart and Rogoff, 2009). A piling of debt comes without risk. The higher the debt level, the ability of borrowers to pay back is also critical. In some circumstances, defaulting is a possibility, as known to happen in a beautiful country, Greece. In 2020, its government debt-to-GDP is recorded at 205.60% (Hellenic Statistical Authority - National Statistical Service of Greece, 2021). As known to many, Greece was a troubled country due to economic mismanagement and its decision to enter Eurozone which put a strain further on the economy (Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Institute, 2017). Nevertheless, if a reasonable debt can be sustained by a small deficit, with the condition that GDP is increasing, accompanied by a higher level of economic growth, it is safe to take up more debt in the future.

1.1 Government Debt in Malaysia

As an open economy, Malaysia is prone to a financial shock. There are two significant events that have affected Malaysian economic growth. First, Asian Financial Crisis in 1997/98 originated from a massive drop in Thai Bath value. Despite its neighboring countries' act of borrowing to salvage their economies, Malaysia remained firm in not borrowing from International Monetary Fund (IMF). Next, in 2007/08, financial chaos spread worldwide from the US to the rest of the economy. The credit crisis deepened without sign of shrinking despite

interest rate cuts and enormous liquidity injections. Based on data by World Bank, from 2009 onwards, debt is recorded as high again for Malaysia and seen to be struggling to recover from the crisis. Debt is crucial for any country to aid its development when in crisis. Even though government borrowing has been recorded since as early as 1970, a sharp increase can be seen in the 1980s with the highest amount in history at 103.4% (debt-to-GDP ratio). This is the phase where economic reform was taking place and later brought growth to Malaysia. From 1986 until 1997, there was a bearish trend in government debt where it hit only 31.9%. While a fluctuation within 9.3% is seen from 1998 to 2008, none surpass 50%. However, for more than a decade from 2009, debt has never been recorded below 50% except in 2010 (49.6%). This clearly shows Malaysia was in trouble getting back on its feet after the 2007/08 financial crisis. Then, a sudden increase of 60.7% of debt-to-GDP occurred in 2020 where the recent pandemic of Covid-19 was obviously the reason behind this. Overall, an acceptable debt-to-GDP ratio was said to be not more than 60%, but a recent event has the government to change the debt threshold to 65%. An excessive national debt can impact the stability of an economy as everything in it is connected. Hence, how fast the government can react and make decisions on its fiscal problem will determine how damage to the economy can be minimized.

1.2 Problem Statement

A crucial way for a country to finance the development of its nation is by borrowing which would eventually generate productivity and boost the economy of a country. However, the increase in government debt may also lead to macroeconomic implications for the country and the occurrence of high debt can give a negative impact on the development of economic growth. Debt, if used correctly by a government would benefit the people where the standard of living can be improved. However, debt becomes bad if too much debt is being taken by a government to the point its ability to repay is questionable. As reported by Bank Negara Malaysia, as of 2021, the total debt held by the federal government amounts to RM979,814 million. The Gross Domestic Product in 2021 is reported at RM1,544,214 million which makes the debt-to-GDP ratio at 64.6%. Although the ratio is within the safe rate (65%), it should not be taken lightly as the Malaysian economic situation has been not improving since the 2010 world economic crisis.

The vulnerability of the Malaysian government accumulating high debt which has been publicly disclosed and educated is somewhere worrisome. By maintaining a sustainable economy, the government of Malaysia must execute and implement practical debt management strategies to moderate the impacts of the debt of the economy when the continuous rise in domestic and external debt of Malaysia occurs. Freeman and Webber (2009) stated that a government debt that is funded by major sectors such as education, healthcare, and nutrition should have a positive impact on economic growth. Therefore, this study is conducted to identify the factors affecting Malaysia's economic growth; namely foreign debt, domestic debt, labor force, trade openness and savings as independent variables for 30 years from 1987 to 2017. As most of the past studies focused on external (foreign) debt, domestic debt received less attention. Therefore, this variable is added to the model of this study. This study might provide insights to policymakers to remain concerned about the government debt by considering reforms to have a better and quality debt management and make it less prone to financial shocks. Also, it could aid investors as a guide in making decisions of investment. It provides a fresh view of the literature which could future researchers in their research endeavors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Foreign Debt and Economic Growth

A mix of findings has been found in numerous studies regarding external debt's impact on economic growth. Makun (2021) explained three different situations that exist in discussing external (foreign) debt and economic growth; 1) debt-overhang, 2) liquidity constraint situation, and 3) direct effect of the debt situation. The first two situations have hypotheses and theories that were used by researchers in understanding the impact of debt growth. Both suggest that a higher debt level drives down economic growth due to an increase in government borrowing. Next, the direct effect of the debt situation shows enormous foreign debt which may reduce the existing capital productivity which in turn discourages the economic (Fosu, 1996). Meanwhile, some studies use all three situations to assess the impact on economic growth, this study will focus only on the direct effect.

Kharusi and Ada (2018) revealed a negative and significant influence of external debt on economic growth in Oman from 1990 to 2015. They investigated the relationship between government external borrowing and economic growth, prompted by the continuous increase in Oman's external debt to finance its annual budget. Pegkas (2018) examined the Greek country from 1970 to 2016 where he focused on the effect of government debt and investment, private consumption, public consumption, trade openness and population growth on economic growth. He concluded there is a negative significant relationship between government debt-to-GDP and its growth. The results also indicated in the long run external, borrowing has a positive contribution to economic growth. The same result was found by Makun (2021) in Fiji between 1980 and 2018. Using the neoclassical growth framework and ARDL models, he looked for long-run linear and nonlinear associations among the variables: external debt, export and total factor productivity. As a result, in the long run, the linear measure of external debt has a negative significant effect on economic growth.

Anning et al. (2016) investigated the impact of government debt on the economic growth in Ghan, using simple Ordinary Least Squares from 1990 to 2015. They investigated the impact of government debt (both external and domestic) by testing three related models at the domestic and external levels including the general growth. It revealed a negative significant relationship between debt (domestic and external) and growth. It recommended among others that government debt borrowing should be discouraged while the revenue base is increased by encouraging tax reform programs. On the other hand, Matemilola et al. (2016) investigated the effects of public debt on the long-term economic growth of common law versus civil law countries in developing economies. The paper applied the Pooled Mean Group estimator that accounted for heterogeneity across countries by allowing the short-term coefficients to differ across countries but constrained the long-term coefficient to be identical. The results revealed that public debt lowers the long-run economic growth of common law countries, but it has insignificant effects on the long-run economic growth of civil law countries. Conversely, public debt has insignificant effects on the short-run economic growth of common law countries, but it lowered the short-run economic growth of civil law countries.

In Malaysia, Lee and Ng (2015) examined whether the public debt has contributed to the economic growth in Malaysia over the period 1991 to 2013. They also examined whether other indicators of debt burden, such as the budget deficit, budget expenditure, external debt service and government consumption, have an impact on economic growth. The results indicated that public debt over time has a negative and significant impact on GDP. Similarly, Daud et al. (2013) analyzed whether external debt contributes to Malaysia's economic growth in the long

run. By employing the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) from 1991 to 2009, the study demonstrated the existence of a long-run relationship between external debt and GDP. In addition, the results also showed a consistent significant and positive relationship between external debt and Malaysia's economic growth for the sub-period analysis. The results substantiated the notion that the accumulation of external debt was associated with an improvement in Malaysia's economic growth up to a certain optimal point; above that level, an additional rise in external indebtedness contributed inversely to the Malaysian economy. This finding was consistent with Burhanudin et al. (2017), who found that government debt has a positive and significant effect on sustainable economic growth using the Autoregressive Distributed Lag approach from 1970 to 2015. There was also unidirectional causality running from government debt to sustainable economic growth. The findings indicated that Malaysia's government debt was an important macroeconomic element for the sustainability of economic growth in Malaysia.

2.2 Domestic Debt and Economic Growth

However, fewer studies were found on domestic debt. Domestic debt is where the debtor and creditor are to be within the same country. There were a few factors discussed to determine borrowing in a country such as the economic growth itself (Castro & Martins, 2020), the value of the collateral (Calza et al., 2013), loose monetary condition (Castro & Martins, 2020) and global factors (Araujo et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Avdjieva et al. (2021) in their study on 40 countries between 1980 and 2015 found that domestic borrowing will be more attractive if external bank lending in the form of bonds was offered. The same study also proved that credit busts were more likely to occur with a lower share of interbank lending and a higher share of lending from banks to non-banks. Furthermore, the authors also stated that external debt composition is a strong predictor of domestic credit cycle performance.

Additionally, Daud (2016) analyzed data from 1970 to 2012 for Malaysia and found a positive and significant result between federal government debt (when it reached maximum level) and economic growth. The result from this study also demonstrated a long-run relationship between federal government debt and economic growth, any amount beyond that would cause a negative relationship. Moreover, a study done by Spilioti and Vamvoukas (2015), showed the results supported the existence of a statistically positive significant relationship between domestic debt and GDP growth using Greek data for about 40 years starting in 1970, taking into consideration the different levels of economic growth in Greece during the examined period. The results suggested that key independent variables such as government debt, the gross domestic per head of population, and the gross national savings represent the important determinants of the growth rate of gross domestic product. In addition, Ibrahim and Khan (2019) indicated in their research that domestic debt has a positive effect on the economic growth in Nigeria from 1981 to 2013 which was highly contributed by a reformation in its financial system.

2.3 Labour Force and Economic Growth

Labour is one of the essential factors of production that contributes to economic development. Many issues have been discussed on the labor force over the decades, including its impact on economic growth (Amir et al., 2015), the importance of the female labor force, minimum wage (Maareka & Moiteaux, 2021), aging (Ribeiro, 2019), and immigrant labor (Azlor et al., 2020). According to Young (2018), a country with an increasing labor force population would help the economy to boost the productivity of its production. A study by Young (2018) examined the impact of labor force dynamics on economic growth in Nigeria from 1970 to 2015, using the newly developed bounds testing approach to co-integration. He found both have significant

positive results on short-run and long-run impacts. Similarly, Amir et al. (2015) have concentrated on the impact of an educated labor force on economic growth in Pakistan. Data on the educated labor force at a primary, secondary, tertiary and higher level is collected in Pakistan using time series data from 1973 to 2013. Human capital is generally considered a positive contributor to economic growth. Their results revealed a positive and significant impact of the labor force with secondary education on economic growth in the long run. In addition, an illiterate labor force was found to have a significant impact only in the short run. Next, based on 100 countries between 1980 and 2005, using an international panel and applying a system GMM approach, a positive and significant result was found from the labor force growth but an insignificant effect from the initial labor force (without growth) on economic growth. This study also focused on the female labor force. The author further explained that the significant result does not mean the increase in productivity itself, merely it is the increase in production due to more workers (Baerlocher et al., 2020). Therefore, noting the contribution of the labor force to an economy, this variable is included in this study.

2.4 Trade Openness and Economic Growth

The impact of trade openness on economic growth has been a consistent view based on foreign economic trade openness which helps the promotion of economic growth quality. Meanwhile, neoclassical growth theory maintains the belief that trade openness also aids in a better economic growth quality through the promotion of capital formation and enhancement of resource allocation efficiency (Kong et al., 2021). According to Mohsin et al. (2021), the relationship between external debt and economic growth in the South Asian region, revealed that trade openness has a positive significant effect on the South Asia economic growth, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal. Their study used panel ordinary least square (OLS), fixed effect, Quantile regression, and robust output regression from 2000 to 2018 to get the meaningful result. The same result was confirmed by Malefane and Odhiambo (2018) who examined the impact of trade openness on economic growth in South Africa using the sample period from 1975 to 2014, employing the autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) bound testing approach. Based on the long-run empirical results, this study found that trade openness has a positive and significant impact on economic growth when the ratio of total trade to GDP was used as a proxy.

Keho (2017) conducted a test on the relationship between trade openness and economic growth for Cote d'Ivoire over the period 1965 to 2014. The ARDL bounds testing approach was used to detect cointegration among the variables. It was found that trade openness has positive and significant impacts on economic growth both in the short and long run. Furthermore, this study found positive and strong complementarity between trade openness and capital formation in promoting economic growth. Morever, Kong et al. (2021) in their study investigated the relationship between trade openness and economic growth quality in China from 1994 to 2018 when the exchange rate fluctuation occurred within this period. Using the ARDL approach, this study postulated that trade openness can significantly promote the quality of economic growth in both the short and long term. On the contrary, Musila and Yiheyis (2015) have studied the effects of trade openness on the level of investment and the rate of economic growth in Kenya using annual time series data. Controlling for several factors, aggregate trade openness was found to significantly affect the level of investment in a positive manner but insignificantly affect the rate of economic growth.

2.5 Savings and Economic Growth

It is common knowledge that in a bad economy, savings can help to brighten the economy. Savings can accelerate an economic recovery no matter how simple it may seem. In comparison to a country with low saving rates, those with better rates of savings showed more accelerated economic growth. Developing should prioritize good savings plans and programmes to achieve better capital accumulation which in turn it helps through investing in productive economic activity (Ribaj & Mexhuani, 2021). A study by Egoro and Obah (2017) investigated the relationship between national savings and Gross Domestic Product in Nigeria from 1990 to 2015. Based on Ordinary Least Square analysis, they indicated that national savings have a positive significant impact on the economy's growth of the nation as measured by GDP. While Jagadeesh (2015) wanted to investigate the role of savings in economic growth in Botswana and apply the Harrod –Domar growth model to the economy.

In this study, the test was based on Auto Regressive Distributed Lagged (ARDL) which checked the existence of a long-run relationship between gross domestic savings and GDP. It used the Dynamic Ordinary Least Square (DOLS) approach to identify dynamic long-run co-integration between GDP and its independent variables. Pertinent to previous findings, there was a positive significant relationship between savings and economic growth which also supported the Harrod Domar growth Model. An investigation on the relationship between saving and economic growth in 84 countries between 1970 and 2010 by Opschoor (2015) indicated that public saving has a positive significant effect on economic growth. Another study by Patra et al. (2017) further re-examined the causal nexus between savings and economic growth for India from 1950 until 1951, and from 2011 until 2012. The findings revealed a significant long-run effect of savings on real activity, that is economic growth. Both are in the pre- and post-break periods in the short and long run. Economic growth increases saving in the short run in the pre-break period.

3. METHOD

3.1 Introduction

The study focuses on the impact of economic growth in Malaysia within a period of 30 years from 1987 to 2017. Several variables were chosen as indicators which were foreign debt, domestic debt, labor force, trade openness and savings to identify and examine the relevant factors. The data type was secondary, and it was taken from various sources such as World Development Indicators, the Central Bank of Malaysia, and the Department of Statistics Malaysia. Table 1 shows the summary of the variables, proxy and unit selected for the study.

Table 1. Summary of the Variable, Proxy and Unit

Variable	Proxy	Unit
Economic growth	GDP per capita	Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)
Foreign debt	Total foreign debt	Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)
Domestic debt	Total domestic debt	Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)
Labour force	Labour force participation rate	Percent (%)
Trade openness	Sum of exports plus imports divided with GDP	Percent (%)

3.2 Model of Study

All the variables in this study were transformed into natural logarithm (ln). Hence, the model of this study is expressed as follows:

$$\ln GROWTH_t = \alpha + \beta_1 \ln FOR_t + \beta_2 \ln DOMt + \beta_3 LAB_t + \beta_4 \ln TO_t + \beta_5 \ln SAV_t + \varepsilon \tag{1}$$

where GROWTH is economic growth, FOR is foreign debt, DOM is domestic debt, LAB is labor force, TO is trade openness, SAV is savings, α is a constant term, ε is an error term, t is year and ln is Natural Logarithm.

3.3 Data Analysis

For this study to get meaningful results, a preliminary test was conducted to detect multicollinearity problems. A correlation test is a statistical measure of the degree to which changes to the value of one variable predict changes to the value of another. If all independent variables are not highly correlated, a unit root test is the next step of the analysis. A unit root test confirms whether a time series variable is non-stationary and possesses a unit root. Thus, to check whether the variables are trended or not, this study identifies the order of integration by applying and running the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Philips-Perrons (PP) stationary test. Once all variables are proven to be free of unit root, a cointegration test is carried out. This test allows non-stationary data to be used so that invalid or spurious results can be avoided. The aim of the cointegration test is to determine and identify whether there exists a long-run relationship among the variables in the model. The long-run estimation test is the very last test to run. Long run estimation test aims to identify the significance of the variables where the use of p-value is observed. If the variable is less than 10%, then, the result has statistically significant. If there is no significant relationship, it means the independent variable does not give an impact on the dependent variable. Finally, the Granger causality test is applied to examine the causality relationship between two variables in a time series. If the p values of the variable which is the dependent variable have significantly affected the value of another variable which is the independent variable, then, there is a causal relationship between the variable or vice versa. Causality can be categorized into three types of causalities: unidirectional causality, bidirectional causality and no causality in a bivariate model. Figure 1 illustrates the steps taken for the study research methodology.
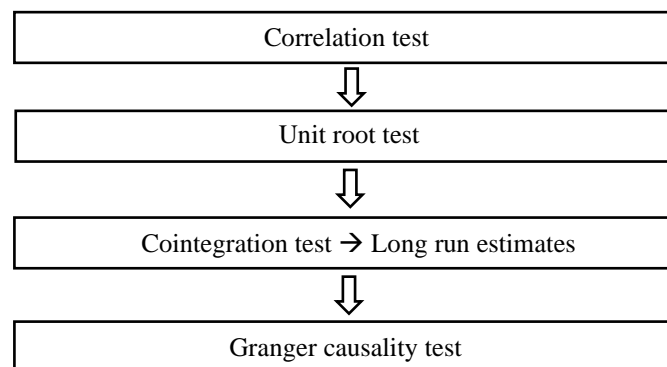
Figure 1. Steps in the Research Methodology

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Correlation Analysis

This analysis is a statistical measure that indicates which two or more variables fluctuate together. A positive correlation shows that the variables either increase or decrease in parallel and a negative correlation shows variables increase while the other decreases.

Table 2. Correlation Test

	GDP	FOR	DOM	LAB	TO	SAV
GDP	1.000000					
FOR	0.712228	1.000000				
DOM	0.927632	0.724990	1.000000			
LAB	0.041834	0.650288	0.123154	1.000000		
TO	0.595420	-0.041967	0.360215	-0.626606	1.000000	
SAV	0.975246	0.576178	0.894885	-0.146217	0.694493	1.000000

As depicted in Table 2, the estimated results show that a high correlation among the independent variables does not exist. Thus, there is no multicollinearity problem. Positive correlations can be seen between foreign debt and domestic debt, foreign debt and labor force, foreign debt and savings, domestic debt and labor force, domestic debt and trade openness, domestic debt and savings, and trade openness and savings. A negative correlation relationship consists of foreign debt and trade openness, labor force and trade openness, and labor force and savings.

4.2 Unit Root Test/ Stationary Test

Both ADF and PP unit root tests have the same hypothesis where the null hypothesis (H_0) is non-stationary and contains either unit root or trend. If the null hypothesis is rejected, then, it is said that the variable does not contain a unit root that does not contain a trend and it is stationary. The presence of unit roots was tested and the order of integration for each variable in levels, first difference and the second difference were identified. Table 3 shows the results of the Unit Root examination.

Table 3. Unit Root Test

Series	Level		First Difference		Second Difference	
	ADF	PP	ADF	PP	ADF	PP
lnGDP	-2.61	-2.61	-4.98***	-4.98***		
lnFOR	-1.56	-1.63	-5.03***	-5.01***		
lnDOM	-1.43	-1.61	-4.40***	-4.40***		
LAB	-0.78	-0.80	-2.32	-5.20***	-8.98***	-7.63***
lnTO	-1.71	-2.34	-4.77***	-6.33***		
lnSAV	-1.60	-1.65	-4.46***	-4.47***		

*Notes: The asterisks ***, **, and * denote significance at one %, five %, and ten % level respectively.*

Table 3 shows that all variables cannot reject H₀ at level, I(0) but all variables are stationary at the first difference which is integrated at order one, I(1) except for LAB which is stationary at the second difference at order two, I(2). Thus, all variables have no unit roots, and it is stationary after taking the first differencing and second differencing.

4.3 Cointegration Test

After identifying the stationary of the variables, a cointegration test was conducted to determine whether there exists a long-run relationship among the variables in the model of research.

Table 4. Cointegration Test

Lc statistic	Stochastic	Trends Deterministic	Excluded	Prob.*
	(m)	Trends (k)	Trends (p2)	
0.481453	5	0	0	>0.2

Table 4 shows that the computed Lc statistics 0.48 is greater than 0.2, thus, we cannot reject the H₀, indicating the existence of cointegration. Hence, there is a long-run equilibrium relationship between economic growth and its determinants which is supported by findings from Makun (2021), Young (2018), Daud et al. (2016) and Jagadeesh (2015).

4.4 Long Run Estimation

Table 5 shows the long-run estimation results. The results indicate that the R-squared is 0.99 which means that 99% of economic growth can be explained by foreign debt, domestic debt, labor force, trade openness and savings while the remaining one percent can be explained by variables that are not included in the model. All variables are statistically significant at a 1% significance level given that p-values are less than 0.01. First, foreign debt has negative relation with coefficients of 0.08 where 1% increases in foreign debt, economic growth will decrease by 0.08% which means government consumption does not stimulate economic growth, instead consumption by the government would be a burden to economic growth. This is supported by Makum (2021), Kharusi and Ada (2018), Pegkas (2018), Anning et al. (2016) and Lee and Ng (2015). Particularly, a study by the latter was similar to this study since both were done in the Malaysian context which strengthens the findings. When foreign debt increases, economic growth will decline because government spending exceeds its revenue which leads to a shortage and the government will depend on borrowing. Thus, trade and industrial activity are reduced because of negative economic growth. The Ringgit value fall might also be a factor in the negative relationship of these variables. However, studies by Burhanudin et. al (2017) and Daud et al. (2013) showed contrary results where a positive relationship was found. Having done their study in Malaysia, the latter argued that the external borrowings positively affected economic growth through higher investment (made possible by this external borrowing). Considering the period of their study, there is a difference of 15 years compared to 30 years of this study, which contribute to contradicting result.

On another note, domestic debt, labor force, trade openness and savings have a positive relationship with economic growth. The coefficients for these variables are 0.23, 0.09, 0.5 and 0.26 respectively. The increase of each variable by 1% will increase economic growth by 0.23, 0.09, 0.5 and 0.26%. For domestic debt, this finding is supported by Ibrahim and Khan (2019), Daud (2016) and Spilioti and Vamvoukas (2015); for labor force by Young (2018), Amir et al.

(2015) and Baerlocher et al. (2020); Mohsin et al. (2021), Kong et al. (2021) Malefane and Odhiambo (2018) and Keho (2017) on trade openness; Egoro and Obah (2017), Patra et al. (2017), Jagadeesh (2015) and Opschoor (2015) on savings.

Table 5. Long-run Estimation

lnGDP	Coefficients	Standard Errors	t-Statistics	p-values
Intercept	-6.31	0.70	-9.00	0.0000
lnFOR	-0.08	0.01	-6.30	0.0004***
lnDOM	0.23	0.02	11.17	0.0000***
LAB	0.09	0.01	11.91	0.0000***
lnTO	0.50	0.07	7.38	0.0002***
lnSAV	0.26	0.04	5.78	0.0007***
R^2	0.99			
Hansen Instability Statistics	0.48(p>0.2)			

*Notes: The asterisks ***, ** and * denote significant at 1 %, 5 % and 10 % level respectively*

Domestic debt is as important as foreign debt. It opens many possibilities in the economy by increasing the money supply in the market. Other than using it to finance infrastructure investment, domestic debt could also increase consumption in the country leading to the rise of the supply side of the economy and enabling higher economic growth. In the case of labor force, more participation will induce a better economy. This is due to the contribution of human capital especially skilled workers by increasing productivity. However as pointed out by Baerlocher et al. (2020), the increase in labor force does not mean an increase in productivity but it is an increase in production due to the increasing number of workers. This is true if the economy fails to create a skilled job opportunity which is the key to developing and increasing productivity. The willingness of an economy to open its economic boundaries promotes good economic growth. This is because the increase in trade will result not only in the efficiency of the resources allocation such as infrastructure and technologies but also in economies of scale. But, in the case of Musila and Yiheyis (2015), their finding was not pertinent to Kenya. This is probably due to a low level of trade openness recorded by the World Bank as of the year 2020 only at 27.35% in comparison to the average world value of 82.61%. Finally, when savings increase, economic growth also increases because savings help to provide more capital which also leads to higher investment in the long-term period. Therefore, it helps to boost the economy. All findings are consistent with the findings of this study. Thus, it confirms the Harrod-Domar growth theory that explains the rate of saving or investment to determine the rate of economic growth.

To conclude, the long run estimates model where includes the coefficient value which is expressed as follows:

$$GROWTH = -6.31 - 0.08FOR^{***} + 0.23DOM^{***} + 0.09LAB^{***} + 0.50TO^{***} + 0.26SAV^{***} \quad (2)$$
$$(-6.30) \qquad (11.17) \qquad (11.91) \qquad (7.38) \qquad (5.78)$$

The model above shows all variables consist of domestic debt, labor force, trade openness and savings which are positive and significant at one percent level, excluding foreign debt which is negative and significant at one percent level.

4.5 Granger-Causality Test

The Granger-Causality test is conducted to investigate causality between two variables in a time series. Thus, this test is conducted to identify the existence of a bi-directional relationship between economic growth and government debt.

Table 6. Granger Causality Test

Null Hypothesis	F-Statistic	Probability
GDP does not Granger cause FOR	0.37618	0.6906
FOR does not Granger cause GDP	0.65817	0.5273
GDP does not Granger cause DOM	1.80137	0.1876
DOM does not Granger cause GDP	0.05319	0.9483

Based on Table 6 above, all variables have a p-value that is greater than 0.05. Thus, it failed to reject the null hypothesis where GDP does not Granger cause foreign debt and domestic debt. Therefore, this study has identified there is only unidirectional Granger causality from foreign debt on economic growth and domestic debt towards economic growth and there is no existence of a bi-directional relationship between economic growth and government debt.

5. CONCLUSION

The study examines the relationship between economic growth with several macroeconomics variables from 1987 to 2017. The data set employed in the study comprises the annual observation of economic growth, foreign debt, domestic debt, labor force, trade openness, and savings. The estimated results show all variables have a positive significance on economic growth, but foreign debt has a significant and negative effect. This study also found no existence of a bi-directional relationship between economic growth and government debt. To conclude, all variables are significant in explaining Malaysia's economic growth. Future researchers are advised to include more independent variables as possible to avoid the biases of results, especially for government debt such as government expenditure, tax revenue and foreign direct investment. In addition, a panel data study that includes countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, or other developing and developed countries could be investigated due to different economic circumstances.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

RSZ and CJE wrote the introduction and literature review sections. SAMZ and ISAK wrote the methodology section, collected data, and performed the data analysis using the DOLS regression technique. SAMZ and ISAK also wrote the data analysis, findings, and conclusion sections. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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Attributes Affecting Quick Service Restaurants Revisit Intention among Student of Higher Learning Institutions

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing demand for quick service restaurants worldwide. Notwithstanding the rapid growth, quick service restaurant is in a competitive industry in which the business survival depends on their ability to attract and retain their customers. Previous studies found that customers from limited buying power market segments, such as teenagers studying at higher learning institutions, often consider their food and dining experience in deciding where and what to eat. This study aims to identify the relationship between attributes of quick service restaurants, higher learning institution students' satisfaction and their revisit intention. A self-administered questionnaire was used and distributed to 240 respondents of two higher learning institutions in Terengganu, Malaysia. Data gathered was analysed using SPSS version 21. Results showed that all six hypotheses of this study are supported. Furthermore, all variables which are food quality, service quality, ambience quality, brand image and convenience have significant relation with students' satisfaction. From the findings, students' satisfaction does mediate the relationship between attributes of quick service restaurants and revisit intention. Attribute of brand image appears to be the most influential factor in students' decision on which quick service restaurants outlets they prefer to go to and dine in. Several managerial implications are discussed as guidelines for quick service restaurant operators.

1. INTRODUCTION

Demands in the foodservice sector have shown rapid growth worldwide, including in quick-service restaurants (QSRs). Despite the growth in demand for their products and services, QSRs face significant competition in attracting and retaining their customers due to the fast change in the global market (Chow et al., 2013). Therefore, to succeed in the business, it is crucial for QSRs businesses to have a well-planned business modus operandi and continuously monitor and update themselves with the changes in demand (i.e., external forces) among various targets markets. Having and incorporating the most up-to-date business model are also believed to help the QSRs' business management know the factors that influence their customers' satisfaction, which will lead to revisiting intentions. Many studies have investigated the factors affecting customer satisfaction with QSRs. Focusing on Malaysia, a study on the relationship between food menu selection and customer satisfaction at one of the QSRs in Kuala Lumpur found that the new food menu was the most preferable and ordered by local residents (Shamsudin et al., 2020). Other studies on understanding customer behavior within QSRs research scope (i.e., Rana et al., 2017; Farooqui & Alwi, 2019; Shamsudin et al., 2020; Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Slack et al., 2020; Chun & Ochir, 2020; Javed et al., 2021) have revealed several key factors namely food attribute, service quality, and physical surrounding. However, little research has examined the effect of restaurant brand and image on customers' satisfaction and behavioral intention (Abdul Talib, 2009). As described by Kalitesi and İlişkisi (2020), an image is a set of brand associations formed and attached to the mind of customers. It is vital for an organization as it creates a competitive advantage that others cannot easily duplicate.

A positive QSRs business image often serves as a product or service guarantee in the eyes and minds of customers (Abdul Talib, 2009). Moreover, the brand image of a QSR business represents a guide for customers from various market segments, including students studying at higher learning institutions. The QSRs business image enables customers to determine if the restaurant fulfills their needs or expectations. The more closely a product or service offering meets a customer's expectations, the more likely it will persuade them to become regular patrons (Bendall-Lyon & Power, 2004). A favorable customer would probably become a repeat customer, and an unfavorable customer would likely become a non-repeat customer. Repeat customers or consumer loyalty with a clear brand image is crucial for the success of QSRs businesses and will remain stable in today's competitive food and service sector. In the case of QSRs in Malaysia, the demand for buying and enjoying food and drinks from QSRs started in 1963 with the opening of A&W restaurant in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. It was found that most young Malaysian citizens preferred to buy and eat food and drinks from QSRs outlets of established and international chain brands (Bakar et al., 2017). As Bakar et al. (2017) reiterated, many well-established restaurants with famous international brands indicate high-quality trust and products and services. However, it was also reported that young consumers in Malaysia, especially students, had limited spending power and tight financial resources, often discussed as the core factor in their decision-making (Mokhtar et al., 2020). Regardless, it is crucial to have a deeper understanding and examine both financial and non-financial perspectives which influence their decision and satisfaction in choosing and dining at any QSRs. Thus, this study aims to examine the relationships between factors that influence attributes of the QSR, students' satisfaction, and revisit intention among students of higher learning institutions in Malaysia, particularly Terengganu.

2. QUICK-SERVICE RESTAURANTS IN TERENGGANU

Terengganu or popularly known as 'The Land of Turtles', is situated in the east coast region of West Malaysia with a scenic coastline overlooking the South China Sea (MTPB, 2008). The increasing QSR business in Malaysia is evident that Malaysia is becoming the new future investment destination for foreign franchising businesses. Most of the franchise businesses operating in Malaysia are quick-service multinational companies. On the west coast of the peninsular, the development of the QSR business has mushroomed in great numbers. However, this contrasts with the states on the east coast, where the numbers are very small, and Terengganu is one of them (Abd Kadir & Harun, 2008).

Table 1. The List of Quick Service Restaurants in Terengganu

QSR Outlets	Location
Mc Donald's	1. Sri Kerteh, Bandar Baru Kerteh, Kemaman
	2. Jalan Baru Pak Sabah, Dungun
	3. Padang Hiliran, Kuala Terengganu
	4. Paya Bunga, Kuala Terengganu
	5. Chukai town, Kemaman
	6. Kijal, Kemaman
	7. Sura Gate, Dungun
Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)	1. Jalan Sultan Ismail, Kuala Terengganu
	2. Pantai Batu Buruk, Kuala Terengganu
	3. Paya Keladi Business Centre, Kuala Terengganu
	4. Mydin Mall, Kuala Terengganu
	5. Giant Hypermarket, Kuala Terengganu
	6. Sura Gate, Dungun
Pizza Hut	1. Jalan Sultan Ismail, Kuala Terengganu
	2. Giant Hypermarket, Kuala Terengganu
	3. Mesra Mall, Kemaman
Burger King	1. Mesra Mall, Kemaman
A&W	1. Pantai Batu Buruk, Kuala Terengganu

Sources: Majlis Bandaraya Kuala Terengganu (MBKT), Majlis Perbandaran Kemaman (MPK) and Majlis Perbandaran Dungun (MPD), Terengganu 2019.

Until now, only a few franchisors have opened their outlets in Terengganu. Among them are Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonald's, and Pizza Hut (see Table 1). In addition, the number of each franchise's outlets is very disappointing. The finding from a study by Abd Kadir and Harun (2008) mentioned that advertising and food taste are the main factors influencing customers visiting and dining at QSRs outlets in Terengganu. The income (i.e., spending and buying power) of young customers or those still studying does not appear to be the core factor for the demand. According to Abd Kadir and Harun (2008), location is the main barrier among customers in patronizing QSRs. For example, there are only a few QSRs outlets in Kuala Terengganu to meet the demand of the whole population. Based on the research, it was found that QSRs are only available in the city center. The researchers also suggested that QSRs increase their number of outlets in the residential area.

3. THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction

Previous studies conducted by several scholars have determined the factors affecting customer satisfaction (Andreani et al., 2012; Chow et al., 2013; Ergin & Akbay, 2010). Nevertheless, there is no agreement on what and which factors would greatly influence customer satisfaction. This might be because each research was carried out with the involvement of different samples at different locations and scopes. As for this study, five factors: 1) food quality, 2) service quality, 3) ambiance quality, 4) brand image, and 5) convenience have been identified as core factors that affect students' satisfaction and their revisit intention to QSRs.

3.1.1 Food Quality

One of the most important factors in influencing customer satisfaction is food quality. This was proven in a study by Mannan et al. (2019), which stated that food quality is valued as one of the most critical determinants of a customer's decision to return to the selected restaurant. Some had suggested that customers would return to a restaurant due to the quality of food and fresh ingredients. Food quality refers to several features, including food presentation, taste, menu diversity, healthiness, and freshness (Hanaysha, 2016). Likewise, Shamsudin et al. (2020) defined food quality as the overall quality characteristics accepted by the consumers. The characteristics mentioned include the internal and external factors such as details of the ingredients and the packaging of the food served. Today's younger generation, especially students studying at higher learning institutions, are more particular in terms of health and safety. They are now more concerned about what they consume and demand high-quality products. Shamsudin et al. (2020) mentioned that the current generation would prefer to consume only good quality food at quick-service restaurants. This contrasts with the previous generations that avoided consuming fast food as they believed it was not healthy. Due to the competition in the fast-food industry and high demand by the customers regarding health and safety issues, service providers and manufacturers are forced to follow the requirements of correct labeling on ingredients, nutrition, and other details. It is crucial to have a deeper understanding on students' responses towards food quality in QSRs outlets.

> H_{1a}: *QSRs food quality has a significant influence on students' satisfaction*

3.1.2 Service Quality

Customers' decisions and purchasing behaviors are interrelated with their appraisal of the overall experience of a service or product (Zhong & Moon, 2020). The study also mentioned that service quality is crucial to a company's success because it affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Gong and Yi (2018) stated that high levels of service quality might lead to high customer satisfaction. This was supported in a study by Shin et al. (2015), which mentioned that dissatisfaction would occur if the service performance was unmatched by customers' expectations. Various views and perspectives can define service quality. The earliest study on service quality by Parasuraman et al. (1988) defined service quality as a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. On the other hand, Ryu and Jang (2008) agreed that service is given by the staff in the service set to the customers. Thus, service quality is one of the vital elements of customer satisfaction, and it will significantly affect organizational success, especially in the service industry such as QSRs.

> H_{1b}: *QSRs service quality has a significant influence on students' satisfaction*

3.1.3 Ambiance Quality

Nowadays, the time has become one of the limitations in preparing food, especially among students, as they need to spend most of their time attending classes and doing their coursework. This leads them to eat out at their convenience more often than ever. For them, going to a restaurant does not only mean dining; but also hanging out with friends, having discussions, and doing their assignments. Hongsrimuang (2020) mentioned that the atmosphere within a restaurant could satisfy a person's expectations or needs, such as physiological needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, safety needs and so on. A study done by Ryu et al. (2010) revealed that customers rated more on time-saving and a better eating environment than on earlier days. Atmospheric factors include lights, ambiance, style, cleanliness, comfortable seats, aesthetic elements, music, and noise are important to customers when dining (Javed et al. (2021) as cited in Liu et al. (2014); Pei and Ayub (2015). These are believed to contribute to behavioral intention or repeat patronage. Many studies suggest that an innovative and more pleasant atmosphere is necessary for a firm's success. Farooqui and Alwi (2019) believed that the atmosphere of a restaurant could be as crucial as the food itself. Improvement of food quality alone will not necessarily satisfy their customers since customers today prefer to enjoy a comfortable dining space rather than the food itself (Horng et al., 2013). The demand from customers for a better dining environment has inspired QSRs marketers to keep on upgrading the restaurant environment to increase consumers' satisfaction. This will then lead to consumers' willingness to revisit the restaurant again (Xu, 2007).

H_{1c}: QSRs ambiance quality has a significant influence on students' satisfaction

3.1.4 Brand Image

One of the strategies to make customers satisfied and become loyal to a product is by building a positive brand image. The brand name refers to a word, a letter, or a group of words or letters (Cannon et al., 2008), whereas the brand image is defined as the perception of a brand through brand association in the mind of customers (Sandoh et al., 2007). According to Andreani et al. (2012), customers familiar with or regularly using certain brands would likely have brand image consistency. It is the way of identifying and differentiating one product from another used by many established industries and companies as a tool in marketing to sustain the business (Idris, 2012). Grewal and Levy (2010) discussed that brand associations reflect the mental links customers have built between a brand and its key product traits, such as a logo, slogan, or famous personality. The important components in the favourability of a brand would be the ability to keep the brand in customers' minds and the fit between the brand impressions in the customers' minds with the desired corporate image of the brand. A study conducted by Sandoh et al. (2007) concerning the overall satisfaction and loyalty intention of cosmetic products revealed that customer loyalty is influenced by a positive brand image, making customers repurchase more in the future. This is supported by a study on quick-service restaurants done by Andreani et al. (2012), which found that the success of McDonald's is also driven by its strategy to maintain its brand image. In his study, Knutson (2000) discovered how college students perceived restaurant brands. It was revealed that branding has an emotional appeal to the customers and tells how consumers want to feel about themselves. Furthermore, customers will also stay loyal to a brand if it fulfills their psychological needs.

H_{1d}: QSRs brand image has a significant influence on students' satisfaction

3.1.5 Convenience

Customers choose QSRs due to their convenience factors (i.e., accessibility, availability, speed of service and flexibility). According to Ergin and Akbay (2010), convenience can be defined as a positive attitude towards time and energy-saving aspects in meal production. Jekanowski et al. (2001) defined convenience as time-saving due to the avoidance of preparing a meal in the context of food that can be found outside the home. It has been discovered that a consumer's attitude towards the 'convenience' factor directly affects the behavior depending on the consumer's involvement with the food and availability of the resources. The importance of the convenience factor has led to a positive relationship with the consumption of QSR's products and services (Ergin & Akbay, 2010). These factors include the standardized menu, which requires little time to decide on what to eat because customers are already familiar with the menu, the consistency in the quality of the food and fast service, which lead to the minimal time needed to spend in getting the food, the easy access to the food (for instance quick-service restaurants are often attached to gas stations within the neighborhoods), the presence of a drive-through concept whereby customers do not need to enter the restaurant to make their purchase as well as the spacious parking facility provided by the restaurants for customers who choose to dine in. Ergin and Akbay (2010) discovered that young consumers choose fast food as it saves their time since they are always in a hurry. Generally, food quality and service quality were the main elements influencing consumers' eating choices. However, due to the changes in lifestyle, the importance of convenience has greatly increased.

H_{1e}: QSRs convenience has a significant influence on students' satisfaction

3.2 Relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Customer satisfaction refers to an individual's desire or dissatisfaction resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to their expectation (Pizam et al., 2016). Moreover, the success in fulfilling customers' pleasure and expectations will lead to the restaurateurs' satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is vital to be on top of the game in the market. Satisfied customers will make them loyal supporters of the brand, which will indirectly increase the company's profit and the good image of the product. However, it is not an easy task to fulfill customers' expectations as they have become more aware and educated. Slack et al. (2020) believed that the success of restaurants depends on their understanding of their customers' needs and wants. Meeting customers' expectations will encourage customers' positive impressions, which helps build the intention (i.e., self-awareness) to come back for the same service experience. Behavioral intention is the subjective judgment about how a person will behave in the future, and it usually serves as a dependent variable in many service research and satisfaction models. Teng and Kuo (2011) defined revisit intention as repurchase intention and behaviors that demonstrate the willingness to recommend and disseminate positive information about a service provided. Customers who received an excellent and memorable experience from the restaurant will form a favorable behavioral intention by recommending the restaurant to others, spreading positive words, or becoming loyal customers, ultimately leading to revisiting intention (Chen & Hu, 2010). Chun and Ochir (2020) stated that the attributes of the restaurant influence customers' revisit intention whereby employees who give customers special attention would make them feel unique, and this would increase their behavioral intention. Thus, the environment and entertainment of a restaurant would elicit the customers' affective response and influence their revisit intention.

H_2: Students' satisfaction has a significant influence on QSRs' revisit intention
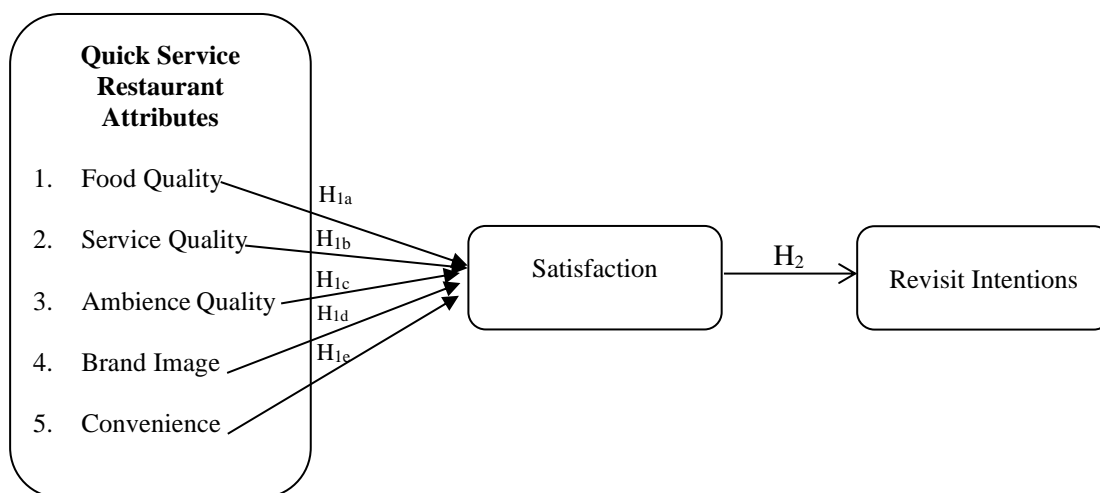
Figure 1. Research Model
Adapted from Chow et al. (2013), Andreani et al. (2012) and Ergin and Akbay (2010)

4. METHOD

4.1 Research Design

The study is based on a descriptive study that involve collecting data to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the study subjects (Lee, 2000). A descriptive study also describes situations and events (Nezakati et al., 2011). This study aims to analyze the relationship between attributes of quick-service restaurants, customer satisfaction and revisit intention among students of higher learning institutions toward fast-food restaurants in Terengganu.

4.2 Population and Sample Size

The chosen population for this study is students of higher learning institutions in Terengganu. According to Nezakati et al. (2011), youngsters find fast-food restaurants particularly well-liked. Consistent with earlier studies that stated that college students frequently consume fast food, the current study chose students from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management (FPHP), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Dungun Branch and Management and Science University (MSU) College Kuala Terengganu Campus.

Table 2. Total Sample

Higher Learning Institutions	Diploma	Degree
FPHP UiTM Dungun	2952	855
MSU College Kuala Terengganu	855	55
Total	3807	910

Based on the table above, the sample size was calculated using the Raosoft calculator with a 5% margin error and 95% confidence level, resulting in a sample size of 303 students. As for this study, 240 respondents were chosen to complete the survey. A small sample size can help lower costs and reduce the time in data collection (Chow et al., 2013).

4.3 Sampling Design and Data Collection

The sampling technique for this study is non-probability sampling, whereby the data can be gathered quickly because subjects are readily available, efficient, and low-cost. A survey questionnaire was used to collect information regarding factors influencing students' satisfaction and revisit intention toward quick-service restaurants. The research instrument used in this research was a self-administered questionnaire in which the respondent reads the survey question and records their answer without the presence of a trained interviewer (Hair et al., 2006). A questionnaire serves as an important tool to generate responses from the respondents because it is an inexpensive way to gather data from a large group of respondents. Three hundred questionnaires were posted to Universiti Teknologi MARA Dungun Campus and Management and Science University College, Kuala Terengganu Campus. However, only 240 questionnaires were returned, giving a return rate of 80%. All completed questionnaires were thoroughly checked to identify incomplete responses. Then, the data were loaded into SPSS Version 21 for further analyses.

4.4 Survey Instrument Development

Close-ended questions were used to collect data for this research. The questions' items were adapted from previous studies, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Questionnaire items were adapted from previous studies

Chow et al. (2013)	Andreani et al. (2012)	Ergin and Akbay (2010)
• Food Quality • Service Quality • Ambiance Quality	• Brand Image	• Convenience

Seven-point Likert Scale was used in the questionnaire items. The scales of 1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Slightly Disagree", 4 = "Neutral", 5 = "Slightly Agree", 6 = "Agree" and 7 = "Strongly Agree" were used to measure respondents' agreement on the statements given. The purpose of having both positive and negative statements is to control the tendency of certain respondents to mark one or the other end of the scale without reading the items. In addition to this, Section A comprised five items devoted to obtaining the respondents' socio-demographic profiles.

4.5 Pilot Study

A pilot study was performed, and the data were then analyzed by referring to Cronbach's alpha values. Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal reliability of the 43 items used in measuring the five constructs. Cronbach's alpha varies from 0 to 1, and a value of 0.6 or less indicates unsatisfactory internal consistency reliability. The customer satisfaction score with six items had the highest alpha coefficient of 0.950. Following this is ambiance quality with an alpha coefficient of 0.938 and brand image with an alpha coefficient of 0.926. Food quality, service quality, and convenience have alpha coefficients of 0.912, 0.913, and 0.871. Finally,

the revisit intention items were computed and analyzed. The alpha coefficient reported for this variable is 0.915. Table 4 exhibits the reliability scores of all constructs above 0.6.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Food quality	0.912	6
Service quality	0.913	8
Ambience quality	0.938	7
Brand image	0.926	6
Convenience	0.871	6
Customer satisfaction	0.950	6
Revisit intention	0.915	4

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Students' Demographic Profiles

As displayed in Table 5, most of the respondents were female (57.5%). More than half of the respondents (50.8%) were in the aged between 22 and 25 years old, and 70.4% were studying at the Degree level. The analysis found that most respondents prefer to dine in at McDonald's. 50% of respondents spent approximately RM11 to RM15 (54.5%) at each visit. It was also found that 81.3% of the respondents would visit and dine in at QSRs 1 to 2 times a week to hang out with friends.

Table 5. Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Socio-demographic Profiles	Total *n*	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	102	42.5
Female	138	57.5
Age:		
Between 18 and 21	71	29.6
Between 22 and 25	169	70.4
Marital Status:		
Single	240	100
Married	0	0
Race:		
Malay	240	100
Indian	0	0
Chinese	0	0
Level of Education:		
Diploma	71	29.6
Bachelor Degree	169	70.4

5.2 Hypothesis Testing: Pearson Correlation Analysis

For the hypothesis testing, Pearson Correlation was employed to measure the relationship between the variables. The results were based on a range of scores between -1 and 1. It is very rare to see 0, -1 or 1. The closer the value of r to zero, the greater the variation of the data points around the line of best fit. A high correlation will show results between 0.5 to 1.0 or -0.5 to 1.0, and a medium correlation will be between 0.3 to 0.5 or -0.3 to 0.5The analysis results confirmed that all five factors have significantly influenced the satisfaction of students from higher learning institutions with QSRs food and services. There is a positive relationship between all independent variables and customer satisfaction (r=0.867). In addition, the correlation of each independent variable (food quality, ambiance quality, service quality, brand image and convenience) is significant at 0.01 levels, two-tailed toward customer satisfaction. The value between food quality and customer satisfaction is 0.750; ambiance quality and customer satisfaction are 0.813; service quality and customer satisfaction are 0.649; brand image and customer satisfaction are 0.833, and convenience and customer satisfaction are 0.750. In addition, Pearson correlation was also used to examine the relationship between the mediator (customer satisfaction) and the dependent variable (revisit intention). It was found that there is a positive relationship between these two variables, with r= 0.769 at 0.01 levels. Table 6. shows the results of the Pearson Correlation analysis.

Table 6. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Customer Satisfaction	Revisit Intention
Food quality	.750**	
Service quality	.649**	
Ambience quality	.813**	
Brand image	.833**	
Conveniences	.750**	
Customer satisfaction		.769**
Total independent variables	.867**	

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

Based on Table 6, Hypotheses: H_{1a}, H_{1b}, H_{1c}, H_{1d}, H_{1e}, and H_2 were tested and further discussed to examine the relationships between the five factors of students' satisfaction with the dining experience and their revisit intention. It was found that food quality is related to students' satisfaction (r=0.750) and their revisit intention. This aligns with Chow et al. (2013), who discovered that food quality, particularly the taste and freshness, is among the most influential factors customers consider when deciding to visit and dine in at QSRs. Findings revealed that from five variables identified and examined in this study, service quality has the least influence on students' satisfaction (r=0.649) and revisit intention. This is probably due to little expectation by the students when deciding to dine in at any of the QSRs in Terengganu. Many customers do not have high expectations of the service quality due to the nature of QSRs business operation, which focuses on the sales volume and counter service rather than providing decent and fine services such as those available at the fine dining and casual dining restaurants (Chow et al., 2013).

Pearson correlation analysis confirmed that the third factor, ambiance quality, positively influences students' satisfaction and their return intention at r=0.813. This supports the study done by Chow et al. (2013). Ambiance quality helps enhance the dining experience of higher learning institution students at the QSRs. Additionally, ambiance quality, such as culinary-related decoration on the restaurant's dining wall, enables the students to better understand the

products and services offered at the QSRs. As discussed earlier, the brand image seems to be an essential tool in influencing customers to decide which QSRs to go to for their meal. The findings of this study further support this notion. Pearson correlation revealed that brand image has the highest score with r=0.833. Andreani et al. (2012) believed that the brand image of foodservice defines the business's profile – whether the products and services offered are trusted and guaranteed. This study has also found that brand image visibility seems to be a crucial factor among the students as they prefer to be seen and known at which restaurant they would go to for their meals. Convenience factor shares a similar score (i.e., r=0.750) with food quality which has less influence on the students from higher learning institutions in Terengganu than service quality, ambiance quality and brand image factors. Based on the campus location of the students, the majority of the QSRs outlets are not within walking distance. Ergin and Akbay (2010) stated that customers often prioritize what they want to eat and have a preconceived idea of what they will eat rather than how to get to the place/restaurant to buy meals.

All in all, the results of the Pearson correlation analysis verified that all five factors were positively associated with the satisfaction of students from higher learning institutions and their return intention. This study has found that the higher the satisfaction score, the higher the possibility of revisiting intention. According to Slack et al. (2020), customer satisfaction often ensures repeat intention behavior and loyalty to a particular restaurant.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted within a quantitative research approach to better understand students' satisfaction and their return intention toward QSRs in Terengganu. Five factors were examined in this study namely food quality, service quality, ambiance quality, brand image, and convenience. It was found that brand image is the most crucial factor influencing the higher learning students' dining experience whenever they decide to buy and enjoy their meals at QSRs in Terengganu. It was assumed that food quality and service quality would be the priority in the students' decision-making. However, the students have a preconceived idea of the food and dining experience that they will get when visiting the QSRs. A well-established and recognized QSRs speaks of the type of food and services made available to their targeted audiences. This is in line with Ryu et al. (2008), who believe that brand image is not just a specific visual representation of an organization or business establishment. It is symbolic of the nature and trusted quality of business operation. This could be the case for students of higher learning institutions in Terengganu. Thus, to remain competitive, QSRs businesses and managements should continuously provide, maintain, and upgrade their food quality, service quality, and ambiance quality. They should have a clear brand image so that their businesses can be easily recognized and remembered by customers. Furthermore, convenient location and food products should be considered to foster customers' satisfaction with the products and services offered by QSRs. These five factors represent the complexity of measuring and understanding customer satisfaction and their return intention toward QSRs dining experiences.

The study's findings confirmed a positive relationship between the satisfaction of students from higher learning institutions and their revisit intention. Since there are only a few QSRs in Terengganu to meet the demand of the whole population, there is a huge opportunity for QSRs operators to open more outlets there. It is also a great opportunity for local QSRs to operate there since there are no local QSRs in the vicinity yet. Thus, the responsible organizations should provide support and guidance to local enterprises in commercializing their products to be successful franchises. This would indirectly boost the development of the QSRs franchising industry, particularly in developing places located on coastal destinations such as Terengganu, Malaysia. Although the study offers valuable findings, several limitations should be noted. This

study was designed specifically for the QSR business operation in Malaysia. Perhaps future scholars could replicate and further extend the study on attributes affecting students' revisit intention of QSRs in other countries. This helps to recognize the expectation and perception of QSRs service delivery from various student demographic backgrounds such as geographical location (i.e., developing and developed countries). Moreover, it would be interesting to examine if there are any significant differences in students' experiences between those who are enrolled at public and private universities. Different settings delimitate biasness in the findings and expansion of the research is required to strengthen the body of knowledge. Finally, future scholars could investigate emerging issues affecting the advancement of QSR businesses such as service technology applications and the COVID-19 pandemic.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

WNFMK and MHJ carried out the entire manuscript including the introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, and discussion and conclusion sections. AA and AEAR also wrote and refine the data methodology section. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1. Survey Instrument

Variable	Item	Code	Cronbach Alpha
Food Quality	The food was served fresh. The food was served at the correct temperature. The food is delicious and flavourful. The portion size of food served is worth the price I paid. The quality of food served is always consistence. I am satisfied with the overall of food quality towards the selected quick service restaurant.	FQ1 FQ2 FQ3 FQ4 FQ5 FQ6	0.912
Service Quality	I was greeted by the staff when I entered the restaurants. The staff is friendly. The staff is able to correct quickly anything that is wrong The staff is able to help customers even in a busy situation. My order was taken promptly. My order was served exactly as what I ordered. My order was served in a timely manner. I am satisfied with the overall service quality towards the selected quick service restaurant.	SQ1 SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ5 SQ6 SQ7 SQ8	0.913
Ambiance Quality	The dining area is always clean and presentable. The quick service restaurant has an attractive dining area. The quick service restaurant always provides comfortable seats in the dining area. The restaurant has a decoration that fits with its image. The lighting and pleasant air-conditioned in the restaurant improved the dining experience. Music and entertainment improved the dining experience. I am satisfied with the overall ambience quality towards the selected quick service restaurant.	AQ1 AQ2 AQ3 AQ4 AQ5 AQ6 AQ7	0.938
Brand Image	The quick service restaurant offered an affordable pricing. The quick service restaurant has attractive packaging design. The quick service restaurant has variety in menu selection. The quick service restaurant offered special meal set (breakfast, lunch and dinner). The quick service restaurant always persistence in promoting new product. I am satisfied with the overall brand image towards the selected quick service restaurant.	BI1 BI2 BI3 BI4 BI5 BI6	0.926
Convenience	Quick service restaurants save me a lot of time with its fast service. Quick service restaurants are always available in anytime because it open 24 hours. Quick service restaurants are easy to access since it available in almost residential area, gas station and shopping mall. Quick service restaurants provide enough parking space. Quick service restaurants provide with easy access to WIFI that allowed me to do my work or surfing while having my meal. I am satisfied with the overall convenience features towards the selected quick service restaurants.	C1 C2 C3 C4 C5 C6	0.871
Customer Satisfaction	I am satisfied with the food quality at the selected quick service restaurants. I am satisfied with the service quality at the selected quick service restaurants. I am satisfied with the ambience quality at the selected quick service restaurants. I am satisfied with the brand image at the selected quick service restaurants. I am satisfied with the convenience at the selected quick service restaurants. Overall, I am satisfied with my dining experience at the selected quick service restaurants.	CS1 CS2 CS3 CS4 CS5 CS6	0.950
Revisit Intention	I would like to come back to the selected quick service restaurants in the future. I have intention to dine in the selected quick service restaurants again. I believe I made the right choice by dining at the selected quick service restaurants. I always consider quick service restaurants to be one of the choices on my 'eating-out' list.	RI1 RI2 RI3 RI4	0.915

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Developing an Interactive Games of Information Management Education for Online Distance Learning

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ABSTRACT

Gamification has progressively gained popularity in higher education as a valuable complement to the breadth of available learning tools for academicians and students. Plausibly, this is due to the nature of the digital native generation, who are more likely to be interested in educational technologies. The purpose of the study is to develop an Interactive Games of Information Management Education that fosters information literacy and cataloguing skills for information management students. It is a self-learning game for academicians and students that aims to improve educational quality in entertaining ways. This study used a few website applications to design the course content with game elements that innovate the teaching and learning method. An online survey was conducted to examine students' perception of online interactive game-based learning. A total of 46 students of a public higher learning institution participated in the survey. Based on the frequency analysis, it was found that students' self-efficacy in information literacy and cataloguing skills increased due to the game's gamified learning approach. In general, most of the students surveyed have a favourable opinion after experiencing the Interactive Games of Information Management Education for their learning activities. Among others, they agreed that the Interactive Games of Information Management Education provide an effective and enjoyable online learning environment. Additionally, students believed that gamification would benefit them in gaining a better knowledge of the course materials.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 epidemic has impacted every industry in the world, including the education sector. The pandemic has caused a significant shift in teaching and learning methods used to present syllabus contents. Before the pandemic, it was common to have face-to-face communication between educators and students, but this is no longer the case. The affected educators and learners are forced to embrace online techniques to continue learning activities. Zainuddin et al. (2021) mentioned that shifting traditional classroom education into an online educational environment with insufficient planning is challenging and ineffective. The advent of social media and online gaming and the ubiquitous usage of intelligent gadgets have made it even harder to keep students motivated to learn (Rabah, 2018). It is more difficult to stimulate students' motivation and interest to engage in online courses and urge them to learn outside the traditional classroom setting (Baber, 2020). Educators are concerned about how to sustain students' interest and involvement (Rahman et al., 2018). Thus, educators are constantly finding ways to develop and implement learning activities that are based on a participatory, pleasurable, and fun manner. The improvement of teaching delivery aims to assist students in remembering more facts by providing entertaining and engaging learning experiences.

Gamification is one of the strategies that can promote teaching and learning effectiveness in a digital environment. Loos and Crosby (2017) expressed that gamification approaches based on active learning offer a solution to the passive classroom and a motivator of student involvement. Active learning encourages student flexibility and participation in the learning experience, and students can get the information on their own through experiential engagement in the learning process (Murillo-Zamorano et al., 2021). Sobocinski (2017) asserted that people's behavior might be improved by increasing motivation and engagement through immersive experiences. Tisza (2021) stated that fun is a crucial learning component, particularly among gamification experts. They can make learning more exciting, fun, and ultimately more effective (Barber, 2018; Barber & Smutzer, 2017). According to Siemon and Eckardt (2017), models that incorporate game dynamics increase motivation and enjoyment but do not always increase learning efficiency. Meanwhile, Llorens-Largo et al. (2016) discovered that the most significant element of a gamified system is the element of enjoyment. Merriam Webster (2022) indicated that fun is what provides amusement or entertainment. It generates interest, a feeling that accompanies or causes special attention to something or someone and induces or persuades to participate or engage.

Based on the above discussion, this paper aims to develop an Interactive Games of Information Management Education (i-GIME) framework to enhance students' learning concentration, motivation, and interest. The main idea behind this framework is that educators should incorporate entertaining gamification technologies in delivering education to students. Gamification in learning improves engagement in educational environments by introducing game elements into the learning context (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Integrating education and entertainment is essential to foster a sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment about learning in students. It is believed that learning delivery assisted by gamification could boost students' confidence, motivation and engagement in the class. The development of the i-GIME framework is relevant as most countries are gradually moving from traditional learning methods to more interactive, engaging, and immersive learning approaches. This paper is divided into several sections.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gamification and Education

Gamification as an educational and commercial strategy is rising in all fields (Deif, 2017). It has received much attention in educational settings (Koivisto & Hamari, 2017). According to Merriam-Webster (2021), gamification is defined as the "process of adding games or game-like elements to something (such as a task) to encourage participation." gamification relies on people using the gamified system in learning to be shown as valuable and practical (Ofosu-Ampong, 2020). Gamification is a societal phenomenon that has emerged because of a generation of digitally savvy people (Alsawaier, 2018). It has emerged as one of the most significant technology advancements in the field of human interaction (Majuri et al., 2018). Ahmed and Sutton (2017) highlighted that gamification is the practice of incorporating game theory and design, game components, game aesthetics, and game mechanics into a learning experience. It involves game features not to transform learning into a computer game, but to enhance learning, engagement and encourage positive behaviour (Alsawaier, 2018).

In China, gamification has been widely carried out in primary and secondary schools and has also been practiced in universities, especially in computer teaching (Ying, 2021). Ofosu-Ampong (2020) indicated that the widespread embrace of gamification and game features in education has a wide range of implications on student outcomes and engagement. Many educators believe that gamification will enhance students' enthusiasm to study and make academics more effective and meaningful (Rabah, 2018). Pastushenko et al. (2018) demonstrate that gamification does assist in increasing students' motivation. The basic idea of gamification is to study, use and replicate the same motivation and flow of the users in other fields. Mirzoyeva and Kabdrgalinova (2021) stated that the power of gamification could increase student focus and perseverance in learning. By playing games and allowing failures, namely repeated failures, students can learn from them. At the same time, cognitive reward includes the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Students must complete tasks successfully to win and pass to the next level. The rewards provided at the end of each game increase motivation.

Santana et al. (2016) mentioned that gamification makes use of the elements present in electronic games, such as rewards, feedback, rankings, and exchanges. Their application in education can motivate students to accomplish specific tasks or competitions to achieve objectives. Gamification has the likelihood of adjusting behaviors, developing commitment and generating learning. In a similar vein, Liu et al. (2017) stated that gamification uses game design aspects to improve educational results, make repetitive processes more entertaining, and make students' assignments and learning more enjoyable Thus, gamification incorporates a fun component that facilitates changing students' attitudes toward learning (Alsawaier, 2018) and boosts students' personalities and productivity (Ofosu-Ampong, 2020). However, for gamification to be effective in education, a concerted effort from educators, administrators, and the information technology department of a higher learning institution is crucial in creating successful gamified courses (Sobocinski, 2017).

Many research highlights the benefits of using gamification in learning. Alabbasi, 2017 stated that students believe that incorporating game elements in education enables them to have a sense of belonging, enjoy, feel less lonely, increase connectivity, lessen boredom, reduce anxiety, reduce stress, and increase positivity in the learning process. Similarly, Plump (2017) asserted that game-based learning tools oriented on online learning amusement, concept support, and good energy could contribute to increasing motivation and meaningfulness. Such

devices can create an inviting atmosphere that encourages active involvement and promotes learning. In another study, Pacheco-Velazquez et al. (2021) showed that the implementation of gamification activities in a problem-based learning classroom can positively impact students' academic achievement and satisfaction, including learning skills.

2.2 Interactive Games of Information Management Education

This study introduces i-GIME to supplement traditional teaching methods in information management courses. It teaches compliance, adaptation, problem-solving, interaction, critical thinking, and creativity rules. Also, it is a productive instructional tool since it enlivens traditional teaching approaches that students find mundane. The i-GIME is built with Google Sites, Wordwall, Liveworksheet, and interactive websites. This application is simple to use and intuitive to navigate. The contents in i-GIME are aligned with a particular course's academic syllabus to achieve learning outcomes. They engage learners' emotions by utilizing a computer monitor filled with vibrant colors and animations to capture and maintain their attention. Students can use a smartphone, tablet, or laptop to play the games available in i-GIME. Apart from games, students can also get information related to library management and information management when accessing i-GIME. It can be used as an alternative and innovative teaching method through digital games and playing games as part of learning for students. As a result, educators' competencies in expanding academic aims to comprehend and support the entire student, not just their subject knowledge and skills but also their social, emotional, and behavioral skills, are being developed. This flexible learning method meets the needs of 21st-century learning, that is, learning without being bound by space and time.

2.3 Developing the Interactive Games of Information Management Education

This i-GIME innovation was designed using Google Sites and is entirely web-based. The interactive information management education games website interface is depicted in Figure 1. The website includes the home menu, courses, tutorials, and external links. Figure 2 illustrates the home menu, which leads to the introduction of i-GIME, a web-based edutainment that delivers comprehensive information. The welcoming information is embedded and related to the information management and syllabus.

Figure 1. Website Interface of i-GIME

Figure 2. Home Menu

As indicated in Figure 3, the courses menu describes the subjects Introduction to Information Skills (course code IMD111) and Introduction to Cataloging (course code IMD223). Introduction to Information Skills is a subject that requires critical thinking skills, such as literacy, citation, and reference skills. Simultaneously, IMD223 is a curriculum that describes library materials according to established criteria. Additionally, each course includes tutorials. Students can play a game to better understand the material in these tutorials, which are game-based. Figure 4 illustrates the multiple games available for IMD111, including Info Hunt, Reshelf It!, Cite it!, and Where is it? According to the subject discussed, these games creatively use the given platform to produce engaging games.
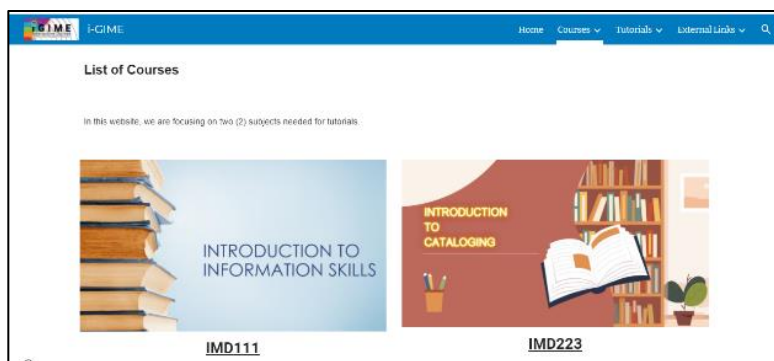
Figure 3. Courses Menu

Figure 4. Course Tutorials

Figure 5 illustrates the game of *Info Hunt*, whereby students can find words hidden in a letter grid as fast as they can by reading the clue given. *Reshelf it!* need the students to drag and drop words to rearrange each sentence into the correct call number order, as demonstrated in Figure 6.
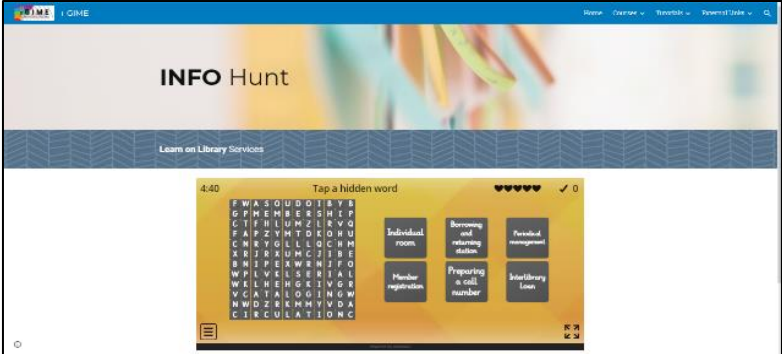
Figure 5. Info Hunt
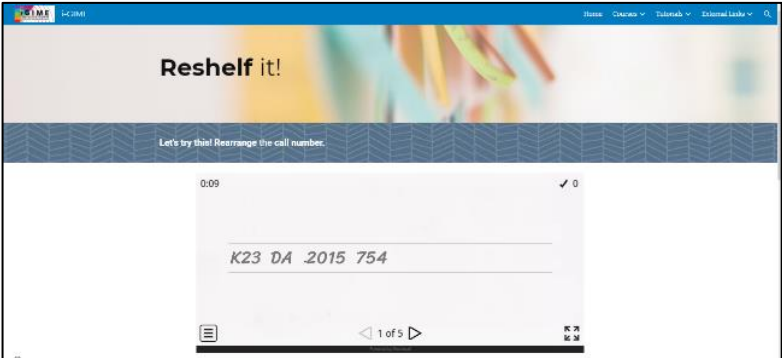
Figure 6. Reshelf It! Menu

In Figure 7*, Cite it!* is the game in which the students can tap the matching answer to eliminate it. Then, they need to repeat until the answers are gone. *Where is it!* Figure 8 is a maze chase, in which they need to find where to refer to, and they need to run to the correct answer zone while avoiding the enemies.

Figure 7. Cite it! Menu
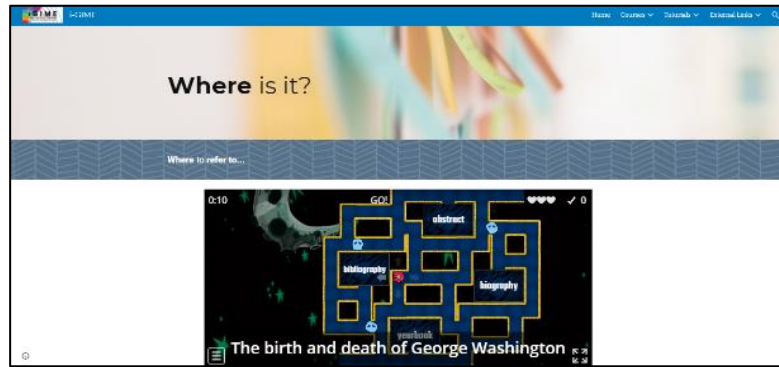
Figure 8. Where is it? Menu

On the other hand, in the IMD223 course, there are various games, such as *Info Hunt, Terms, Discover it!, Access Point,* and *Catalog it!* for the students to participate and learn in this course. Figure 9 shows the info hunt game, enabling them to play and enjoy a crossword puzzle about cataloging. They need to read the clues and type the answers into the crossword puzzle. Figure 10 illustrates the *Terms, Discover It!* game, where students can identify terms in bibliographic records with the drag and drop pin function to their correct place on the image.

Figure 9. Info Hunt for IMD223

Figure 10. Terms, discover it! Menu

In the *Access Points* game, the students can correctly identify the main entry and added entry/ies. As displayed in Figures 11 and 12, describe the *Catalog it!* They can catalog books, sound recordings, and continuing resources from the game. Also, they can check their answers or email them to their educator.

Figure 11. Access Point Menu
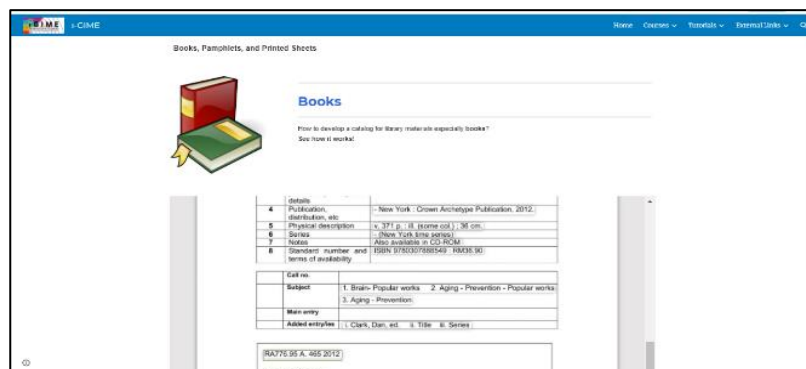
Figure 12. Catalog it! Book Menu

External link menu listed menus such as *Did You Know, Blogs, Directory*, and *References*. As illustrated in Figure 13, Did You Know is an exciting sharing about libraries in the menu. As shown in Figure 14, there are links to blogs related to library and information management.
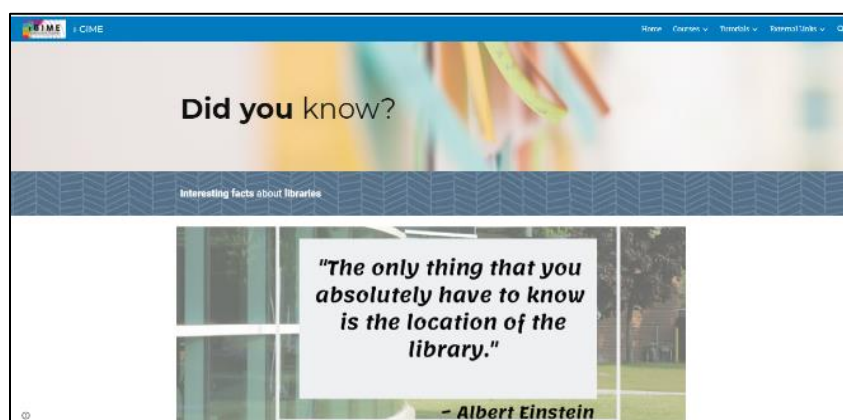
Figure 13. Did you know? Menu

Figure. 14. Blogs Menu

Figure 15 describes the directory. It includes the link to information agencies, such as libraries, archives, and museums. A list of references used in this innovation is made available in the *References* menu, as illustrated in Figure 16.

Figure 15. Directory Menu
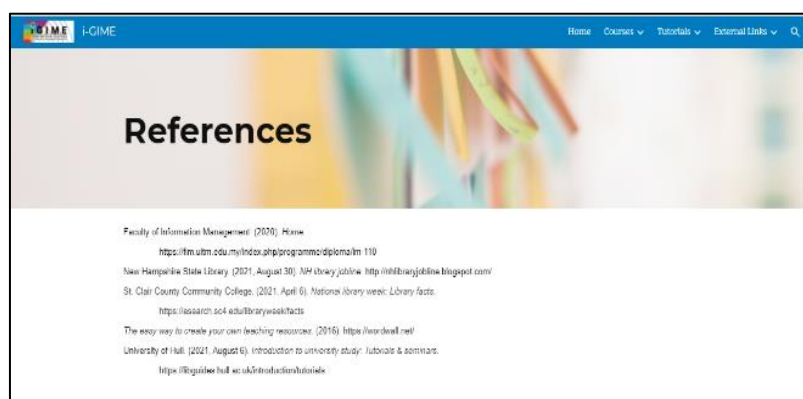
Figure 16. References Menu

I-GIME's implementation aims to make learning an exciting and pleasurable experience for students. Students can check the syllabus and courses menu that explains subjects in detail from the i-GIME web. Lecturers can proceed with online lectures and provide the students ample time

to explore the games, thus enhancing their understanding of the subject covered. There are game-based tutorials, which are *Info Hunt, Reshelf it! Cite it! Where is it? The term, discover it, Access Point Menu,* and *Catalog it*. The result of the assessments is automatically generated from the web which lecturers can document for monitoring purposes. By experiencing i-GIME, the students would better understand and comprehend the subject in an edutaining manner. The i-GIME comes with an external list that assists students with their queries, such as *Did you know page, Blogs, Directory*, and *References*. Such interactive edutainment games would benefit students and lecturers during the learning and teaching process. For example, they allow lecturers to continuously monitor and control their progress through feedback. More importantly, they could help develop students' cognitive, motor, and spatial skills, which are essential in the learning process.

4. METHOD

An i-GIME prototype was used to test the learning effects of gamification in education ideas. To refine the i-GIME prototype, we conducted a pilot study and used the results to fine-tune the game's mechanics. A total of 46 students were randomly selected from a list of Semester 1 and Semester 4 undergraduate students from a local university in Sarawak. Students were given the i-GIME website link to access and play the featured games. Each game takes roughly 5 to10 minutes, and students were encouraged to find solutions to the problems given in each game. After experiencing the i-GIME, they were given an online survey that contained closed-ended Likert-scale questions related to their perceptions using i-GIME. The questions were written in statement sentences classified by perception domain for simple reading and interpretation. The response options were 'strongly agreed,' 'agreed,' 'neutral,' 'disagreed,' and 'strongly disagreed.'

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A total of 46 respondents participated in the survey: 30 students were from Semester 1 (enrolled in course IMD111), and 16 students were from Semester 4 (enrolled in course IMD223).

Table 1. Students' Perception of the i-GIME

| Response		Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Neutral	
	Statements	Sem 1	Sem 4	Sem 1	Sem 4	Sem 1	Sem 4
1.	The i-GIME instruction provided makes it easy to use the "game-based edutainment".	12 (40%)	6 (37.5%)	15 (50%)	8 (50%)	3 (10%)	2 (12.5%)
2.	i-GIME is enjoyable.	10 (33%)	5 (31.3%)	17 (57%)	10 (62.5%)	3 (10%)	1 (6.3%)
3.	i-GIME could help me learn the knowledge of information skills in information management.	15 (50%)	8 (50%)	10 (33%)	6 (37.5)	5 (17%)	2 (12.5%)
4.	i-GIME could help me learn the knowledge of cataloging skills in information management.	12 (40%)	8 (50%)	12 (40%)	6 (37.5%)	6 (20%)	2 (12.5%)
5.	I will be more motivated on learning with i-GIME.	11 (37%)	8 (50%)	16 (53%)	3 (18.8%)	3 (10%)	5 (31.3%)
6.	It will be more interesting if instructors apply i-GIME to their teaching.	15 (50%)	7 (43.8%)	12 (40%)	6 (37.5%)	3 (10%)	3 (18.8%)

Note: There was no response received for "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed", thus were omitted from the table (N = 46 respondents)

The result from Table 1 showed a total of 12 (40%) respondents from Semester 1 and a total of 6 (37.5%) respondents from Semester 4 rated strongly agreed with Statement 1 that the i-GIME instructions provided make it easy to use the "game-based edutainment". However, for the rating agreed was equal from Semester 1 (15) and Semester 4 (8). Both were 50%. Only 3 (10%) from Semester 1 and 2 and (12.5%) from Semester 4 took a neutral stand with Statement 1. The data collected from Statement 2 showed that 10 (33%) respondents from Semester 1 and 5 and 31% of respondents from Semester 4 strongly agreed that the i-GIME is (extremely enjoyable). Meanwhile, for Semester 1, 17 (57%) respondents and Semester 4, 10 (62%) respondents agreed that the games were very enjoyable, whereas 10% of Semester 1 and 3 respondents, and only 1 (6.3%) Semester 4 respondent had a neutral reaction and found the games to be somewhat enjoyable. No students disagreed or strongly disagreed. The data collected from Statement 3 found that the use of i-GIME enhanced students' knowledge of information skills. As shown in Table 1, 50% of the respondents rated strongly agreed, Semester 1 with 15 respondents, and Semester 4 with eight respondents. Out of the Semester 1 respondents, 12 (40%) and Semester 4, 6 (37.5%) respondents rated agreed and only 6 (20%) for Semester 1, and 2 (12.5%) for Semester 4 rated neutral.

As for Statement 4, 12 (40%) Semester 1 respondents and 8 (50%) Semester 4 respondents rated strongly agreed. 12 (40%) of Semester 1 and 6 (37.5%) of Semester 4 respondents agreed with the statement, whereas 6 (20%) of Semester 1 and 2 (12.5%) of Semester 4 respondents rated neutral. Statement 5 results show that 11 (37%) from Semester 1 and 8 (50%) from Semester 4 strongly agreed. This is followed by 16 (53%) Semester 1 and 3 (18.8%) Semester 4 respondents who agreed with the statement. A total of 3 (10%) students from Semester 1, and 5 (31.3%) from Semester 4, were neutral. The data from Statement 6 shows that 15 (50%) from Semester 1 and 7 (43.8%) from Semester 4 strongly agreed. Next, from Semester 1, 12 (40%) and Semester 4, 6 (37.5%) firmly agreed, whereas a neutral rating was chosen by 3 (10%) Semester 1 and 3 (18.8%) Semester 4 students.

6. DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings of the current study demonstrate that gamification can bring a positive impact on teaching and learning delivery. Based on the statistical analysis, the study found six significant students' perceptions of the i-GIME. First, the results show that students understood the instructions given in i-GIME and how they can be applied in their learning. Second, the students understood the material better and found the gamification method enjoyable using blended or online learning. This shows that they have a positive perception of gamification. Third, the students prefer gamification in online learning, improving their understanding of the information skills subject. Fourth, the students believed that gamification in i-GIME also improves their knowledge in cataloging skills subject that requires technical skills like information skills subject in Statement 3. Fifth, it indicated that students' perception of positive gamification motivates them to be interested in the topic taught through gamification. Researchers have found that gamification may be an effective method for motivating students to study, solve issues in various fields, and interact with diverse people (Deloitte, 2012). Finally, the results indicate that students think it would be more interesting if instructors applied i-GIME to their teaching. In addition, i-GIME may assist students in putting their knowledge into practice. Students can develop thinking and problem-solving abilities through i-GIME. They can also experience the joys of winning and losing in a competitive atmosphere with their peers.

All in all, the findings are consistent with the results of the previous studies who found that gamification has a positive impact on teaching and learning. Gamifying learning could increase students' interest in the course and pushes them to be more ambitious for success. Incorporating

gamification techniques improves student motivation to support other students in their learning. Through gamification, students can track their progress and improve in areas where they are inadequate. This makes the learning process more relaxed, stress-free, and fun. The implication of gamification, especially the type of interactive game, can attract interest and motivate students to learn and be more focused on the learning process. The student-centered learning to explore the realm of knowledge and information independently and train self-reliance among learners is appropriate and meets the concept of digital learning.

CONCLUSION

The study aims to develop an i-GIME framework to enhance students' learning concentration, motivation, and interest. The i-GIME is designed to improve educational quality in entertaining ways by developing a novel strategy of gamification to sustain and raise students' concentration, motivation, and interest in the learning process while attending an online class or course. The authors believe that active learning encourages student flexibility and involvement in the learning experience. The students also could obtain information on their own through experiential engagement in the learning process. Thus, it is important that educators should stimulate or create interactive learning experiences that are more participatory and entertaining in nature. Although the study provides valuable insights, several shortcomings should be addressed. The study focused on students in one state of Malaysia which limit the generalization of the findings to other countries. Moreover, the i-GIME prototype was only tested on Information Technology courses. Future studies should include other states, countries or courses to add support to the validity of the findings. This is important as it extends our current knowledge about the effectiveness of gamification in fostering students' interest and motivation in online learning. The success of i-GIME should inspire for more development of other similar gamification-based teaching and learning methods that match the need of the digital native generation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

NK and MM carried out the introduction and literature review sections. SH collected and refined the data and performed the data analysis. SH and NK also wrote the data methodology section. SH wrote the findings and discussion sections. SH and NK conceived of the study and participated in its design and coordination and helped to draft the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Understanding Students' Online Learning Readiness towards Skill-based Hospitality Courses

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate students' online learning readiness for the skills-based courses in the hospitality higher institution in Terengganu, Malaysia. A 20 items online questionnaire from the five dimensions of the Online Learning Readiness Scale: self-directed learning, computer/internet self-efficacy, motivation for learning, online communication self-efficacy, and learner control was adopted. Five hundred online surveys were distributed, and 482 respondents have been selected as the final sample size. A quantitative research method with convenience sampling and descriptive statistics was adopted to analyze the results using SPSS statistical software. The results revealed that computer and internet self-efficacy are students' highest average mean score, followed by online communication self-efficacy, motivation for learning, self-directed learning, and the lowest average mean score is learner control. Thus, overall scores indicated that students' online readiness for skills-based courses is at a medium level. Based on the statistical results, the study helps educators in hospitality higher learning institutions to engineered appropriate content and delivery methods for skill-based online learning courses. The study concluded by offering suggestions for future research to improve students' readiness towards skill-based online learning courses.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the internet has significantly changed the way we live our lives, online learning is becoming a norm for students ranging from elementary school to post-secondary education. It is commonly conducted in both synchronous and asynchronous environments (Jolliffe et al., 2012). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, UNESCO (2020) reported that preschools, schools, and higher educational institutions had been closed in 172 countries, which affected 98.5% of the world's student population. In Malaysia, the government enforced Movement Control Order to increase social distancing and slow down the spread of the virus among the public. The pandemic has altered the educational plan in Malaysia. Students were instructed to return to their own homes as schools and universities were closed. To reduce close contact and mass gathering, the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia urged all higher education institutions to conduct online teaching (Malay Mail, 2020). Thus, most universities and colleges have turned to online learning to replace the conventional face-to-face learning system to maintain students' educational progress. This includes skill-based courses such as housekeeping, front office, and cooking. Although online learning seems a better option, educators have argued whether the approach is appropriate for practical-based courses. Concerns are raised about the course appraisals of the students' skills execution, such as the cooked food presentation, correctly utilizing a knife, and the foremost crucial part, the final product's standard taste (Rahmawati, 2021; Amin et al., 2021).

Previous studies have investigated the impacts of online learning on hospitality and tourism students. Mocanu and Deaconu (2017) examined 110 Hotel Management students in Pune, India, and found that online learning is ineffective for a practical-based course such as Hotel Management. Most of the students prefer face-to-face and hands-on practice during practical classes. On another hand, Baker and Unni (2019), in their cross-cultural study on the effectiveness of online courses in improving Asia and United States hospitality students' grades, stated that there was no significant difference in the efficacy between face-to-face and distance learning education. They argued that if online distance learning is the only option available, it can successfully replace the conventional face-to-face learning method. However, the students' online courses, either solely theory-based or combined with practical-based classes, were not clearly stated. Thus, a longitudinal study conducted by Hsu et al. (2017) explored the future directions of hospitality education and reiterated that students appreciated and preferred the current learning style through interactive classroom and community learning in the hospitality course offered. They reported that the lack of empirical studies on the program's curriculum design, the isolation of the program course and designers, and the highest conventional and limited teaching materials are among the weaknesses and opportunities in hospitality and tourism education that should be addressed accordingly (Maumbe, 2014; Murphy & Jongh, 2011; Weber et al., 2010).

Based on the above discussion, it is crucial that educators investigate whether their students are ready for skill-based online learning. The study is inspired by the work of Chung et al. (2020a, 2020b) who used 18 online learning student readiness (OLRS) items to examine online readiness among undergraduate students in Malaysia. The OLRS has five dimensions composed of computer/internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning, learner control, motivation for learning, and online communication self-efficacy. The respondents were students undergoing open distance learning and enrolled in at least two online courses. However, there was no specification on the courses selected for the study. The results were based on students' views and experiences while undergoing a human resource course for degree students and an economics course for diploma students. Since studies concerning students' readiness for skill-

based online learning are limited, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Have the students enrolled in any online courses, currently or in the past?

2. What is the university student's readiness for the online skills-based courses?

3. What is the highest dimension score in OLRS among hospitality students taking skills-based online courses?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hospitality Educational Programme

Many hospitality institutions have been established as demand arises from the hospitality industry with the core hospitality skilled graduates. In 1910, Westminster Technical College was established, followed by the opening of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration in the US (Scott et al., 2008), the hospitality courses in Australian universities in the mid-1970s (King et al., 2003), and thousands of other hospitality institutions around the world. The trend is also evident in Malaysian as there is a significant growth of higher learning institutions' related to tourism and hospitality management programs (Nair & Whitelaw, 2008). As the number of these hospitality educational institutions increases, educators must understand the nature and the design of the hospitality curriculum. Researchers realized the importance of curriculum standards in hospitality education as they acquire a set of competencies and skills to prepare students to enter the workforce (Min et al., 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). In many countries, hospitality programs must meet and comply with the standards accredited by a qualified agency or professional body. There are many hospitality educational institutions worldwide, and several hospitality program standards were formed to guide the curriculum design in different countries. For example, the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) in Malaysia was revised by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to ensure that the hospitality programs offered by Higher Education Providers (HEPs) in Malaysia met an acceptable level of quality (MQA, 2019).

There are numerous degree programs offered by colleges and universities designed to serve the hospitality industry. A degree program in hospitality and tourism colleges is designed to offer job opportunities in many hospitality and tourism industries. There are hospitality skills-based courses under the technical and vocational education (TVE) that cater to hands-on teaching methods in providing students with specific technical skills. The vocational system refers to an organization's efforts to produce students with the knowledge and fundamental skills and prepare them to become skilled workers in the future (Laugho & Lillis, 1988). In the conventional culinary arts teaching method, instructors demonstrate skills, and students then practice the demonstrated skill in class. The chef-instructor provides feedback on the students' command of the practiced skill (Noe, 2005). As they emphasize technical skills and knowledge, these courses are distinctively TVE from the general education system. It is essential to create a collaboration between hospitality and tourism education and the needs of the hospitality and tourism industry to ensure the student employee transition works smoothly between these two stakeholders and prepare a successful intellectual workforce for the hospitality and tourism industry (Millar et al., 2010; Min et al., 2016). Therefore, the program's accountability, credibility, and effectiveness should be a concern among the stakeholders such as education providers, government, and students.

2.2 Measuring Online Learning Readiness Scale

The concept of OLRS was first proposed in the Australian vocational education and training sector (Warner et al., 1998). Since then, many researchers (McVay, 2000, 2001; Hung et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2003) have studied this concept, and various dimensions of this online learning readiness have been illustrated and validated. From the fundamental aspects of the ability to learn independently, confidence and capability in using the technological tools and face-to-face learning instructions (Tang & Lim, 2013), the assessment tools have been upgraded to evaluate the individual's technical experience and competency in using computers (Guglielmino and Guglielmino, 2003). Hung et al. (2010) expanded the McVay (2001) readiness study to the new dimensions of OLRS: self-directed learning (SDL), computer/Internet self-efficacy (CIS), motivation for learning (ML), online communication self-efficacy (OCS), and learner control (LC).

The learning domains are experiencing significant changes as higher-education institutions rapidly adopt the concepts and practices of e-learning (Hung et al., 2010). Nowadays, numerous universities, including Malaysia, offer web-based courses that complement classroom-based courses. Online courses give learners an array of benefits such as adaptability (Chizmar & Walbert, 1999), openings to work collaboratively and closely with instructors and other students from distinctive schools or across the world (Chen & Yang, 2014), and flexibility (Poole, 2000). These are some reasons why students need to be ready to learn online. According to Guglielmino and Guglielmino (2003), students' readiness to learn online can be evaluated through the individual's technical experience and internet and computer literacy (Schreurs et al., 2008). In this manner, it is imperative to know the student's involvement in online learning course enrolment before a conclusion can be distinguished on online learning students' readiness, particularly for the skills-based courses.

2.2.1 Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning refers to the learner's initiative with the responsibility to plan, implement and evaluate the learner's own effort (Premkumar et al., 2013). Benson (2011) has described how SDL has been used as a model to promote self-control in the learning process while allowing students to reach the learning goal by interacting with peers outside the classroom. In an online learning setting, educators must be proactive in guiding potential students to determine whether they are ready to take an online course. Lin and Hsieh (2001) found that successful online learners know what to decide best when taking the online course and efficiently follow the class based on their own pace and readiness for existing knowledge and goals. Lin and Hsieh (2001) reported that self-directed learners are usually more active in learning tasks such as completing classroom tasks, reading online learning material, planning, and evaluating learning milestones. Chung et al. (2020a) employed SDL to examine students' ability to plan their studies, seek assistance when faced with problems, manage time, and set up learning goals and expectations towards learning goals and expectations performance. They revealed that students would only seek assistance when facing problems while learning online and know how to manage their time well. However, it was also stated that students could not set up online learning goals. A study conducted by Samsuri et al. (2014) on the students of three schools in Shah Alam, Selangor has revealed that students enjoy online learning compared to traditional face-to-face learning because of the flexibility in planning and selecting the courses either guided by the instructor or through self-study. Thus, they also responded that e-learning had given them the flexibility to learn at their own time and wherever they wanted.

2.2.2 Computer and Internet Self-Efficacy

Computer and internet self-efficacy are related to technical skills involving computers and the internet (Peng et al., 2006; Keramati et al., 2011). Chung et al. (2020b) reported that a lack of technical skills such as managing software for online learning is among the main challenges students face online. Since online lessons are delivered via technology-enhanced devices, students must be competent and ready to deal with computers and the internet. Hong and Kim (2018) stated that the students' technology-related skills, knowledge, competencies, and attitudes using the technological concepts are the OLRS dimensions used to meet the course learning goals and outcomes.

2.2.3 Motivation for Learning

Motivation has substantially impacted learners' attitudes and learning behaviors in educational research and practice (Fairchild et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation for learning can be categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) stated that intrinsic motivation is a critical element in the social, physical, and cognitive development of inherent interests that grow in knowledge and skills. It is commonly associated with higher-quality learning, better learning strategies, a lower dropout rate, and greater school enjoyment (Czubaj, 2004). On the other hand, Ryan and Deci (2000) refer to extrinsic motivation as a behavior to achieve a specific reward, such as getting a higher grade on exams and earning awards and prizes. They identified that learners in an online setting had significant freedom to determine their learning path, which might benefit learners with intrinsic motivation. Yang et al. (2006) found evidence that motivation is positively related to how learners perceive each other's presence in online courses. Saadé et al. (2007) noted that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation played an essential role in the success or failure of online learning. Mocanu and Deaconu (2017) stated that students' motivation increased as the internet created an opportunity to see what is happening in different parts of the world. As Singh (2014) described, students' characteristics like motivation and self-discipline are significant contributors to online learning effectiveness. Hung et al. (2010) proposed that the ML dimension includes students' openness to new ideas, motivation to learn, self-improvement, and sharing ideas with peers and instructors. This has been adopted by Chung et al. (2020a), who found that undergraduates in a Malaysian university agreed that they are open to new ideas when learning online, motivated to learn online, learn from their mistakes, and are willing to share ideas with others.

2.2.4 Online Communication Self-Efficacy

Since there is no face-to-face interaction between lecturers and students, online communication has become the only way for students to communicate with their lecturers and other classmates (McVay, 2000). Thus, the author also stated that lecturers should provide interactions and communication opportunities in web-based learning to reflect and internalize what students have learned by posting questions and sharing their opinions and emotions between instructors and peers. Similarly, Roper (2007) suggested that successful students fully utilize online activities, engage with students and instructors, work with other online students, ask questions, and use feedback and encouragement to stay motivated. Hung et al. (2010) proposed the online communication self-efficacy dimension, encompassing idea delivery, student confidence level, and participation in online discussion as crucial for students' online readiness level.

2.2.5 Learner Control

Learner control includes the degree to which learners can select what, when, where, and how to learn (Kraiger & Jerden, 2007). Conventionally, students' learning settings are straightforward and mainly focus on hands-on instructional skills or using textbooks. However, web-based environments allow the study materials to be more flexible and accessible in online learning. Shyu and Brown (1992) stated that learner control in online learning would enable students to coordinate and choose their learning, process, experience, learning pace, and amount of content with maximum freedom. This learner's dimension is an essential part of skills-based courses as students can watch, learn, and practice the lecturers' lessons repeatedly based on the student's own time. As supported by previous studies, learners' control dimension becomes an integral part of students' readiness (Stansfield et al., 2004; Hsu & Shiue, 2005). In this study, learner control incorporates directing their learning progress, controlling, keeping up learning without being diverted by other online activities, and repeating online material based on their learning needs.

3. METHOD

The study employed a quantitative approach to investigate students' online learning readiness for skills-based courses. The survey instrument, Online Learning Readiness Scale, was adopted from the work of Hung et al. (2010). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A, the demographic factor consisted of gender, age, programme, and part. In section B, the 20 items from five dimensions of OLRS: self-directed learning (5 items), computer/internet self-efficacy (3 items), motivation for learning (4 items), online communication self-efficacy (3 items), and learner control (5 items). The close-ended question of 'Yes' and 'No' answers was used in section A, and the Likert scale was used in section B based on the level of agreement where; 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The study was conducted at one of the higher institutions in Terengganu with a total population of 1066 students. Based on Raosoft Sampling Calculator, the recommended sample size for the stated size population is 283. This is in line with the minimal sample size of 278 to 285 people for a population of 1000 to 1100 people suggested by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). To account for the possibility of a high non-response rate for an online survey, the sample size was set higher at 500. A convenience sampling was applied for a three-week data collection period that yielded 482 valid responses. A descriptive statistic with the mean and standard deviation analysis was used to assess the hospitality students' online learning readiness for skills-based courses.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Reliability Analysis

The OLRS measurement model was evaluated by examining the composite reliability for the five dimensions. Hulin et al. (2001) suggested that 0.6-0.7 is an acceptable level of reliability construct, and 0.8 or greater is an excellent level. Studies conducted by Hung et al. (2010) represented 0.727 to 0.871 reliability scale and Chung et al. (2020a) further confirmed the result between 0.841 to 0.911 and 0.781 to 0.883 (Chung et al., 2020b). It is essential to measure the composite reliability for OLRS first before any analyses are conducted. Table 1 shows the value of composite reliability between 0.664 to 0.896 for the five dimensions.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Items	Composite Reliability
Self-directed learning	5	0.896
Computer/internet self-efficacy	3	0.793
Motivation for learning	5	0.834
Online communication self-efficacy	3	0.664
Learner control	6	0.842

4.2 Respondents' Demographic Background

The results indicate that there are more female respondents than their male counterparts, with 359 female respondents (74.5 %) and only 123 male respondents (25.5%). Table 2 shows that 229 (47.5%) participants are enrolled in the Diploma in Culinary Arts programme. In comparison, 115 (23.9%) participants are enrolled in the Diploma in Hotel Management programme, followed by 74 (15.4%) participants enrolled in the Diploma in Foodservice Management. Meanwhile, 36 (7.5%) participants are enrolled in the Bachelor Sc. Hons in Foodservice Management programme, while 28 (5.8%) participants are enrolled in the Bachelor Sc. Hons in Hotel Management. The first study objective is to identify the students' enrolment in any online learning courses, currently or in the past. The results showed that 55.8% of the respondents answered 'yes' while 45.2% responded otherwise. The authors aimed to identify if having online learning experiences will make them more prepared and ready to undergo skills-based courses as they have already been exposed to them. Thus, they would know what to expect when attending online skills-based courses. This study intends to identify the impact of students who have previously taken online learning courses on hospitality students' readiness stage and performance in online skills-based courses. Wojciechowski and Palmer (2005) stated that students' characteristics predict the community college student's success in online classes in Michigan. The finding shows a positive and significant relationship between previous online courses and a better grade in the study. The results align with previous research findings related to online learning education's success for students with experience participating in online learning classes (Eisenberg & Dowsett, 1990; Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

Table 2. Student Enrolment in Online Learning Courses

Program Code	Yes	No	Total	%
HM110	64	51	115	23.9
HM115	119	110	229	47.5
HM112	50	24	74	15.4
HM240	19	9	28	5.8
HM242	25	11	36	7.5
Total	277	205	482	100.0

4.3 Respondents' Readiness for Online Learning in the Five Dimensions

The second objective of this study is to identify the students' readiness for the online skills-based courses in hospitality institutions in Terengganu, Malaysia. As presented in Table 3, the mean scores and standard deviation for all the items under the five dimensions of OLRS. Based on the results, the composite mean score for each dimension is between (M=3.27) to (M=3.58) on a 5-point Likert scale. The findings on the first dimension of OLRS of Computer/Internet Self-efficacy indicate that the students were moderately confident in their internet skills (3.80). The mean score for "using the basic function of computer software programs" was 3.53 and managing software or application for online learning classes (M=3.41). The results contradicted the findings by Chung et al. (2020a), in which the overall mean score for computer/internet self-efficacy was 4.23, followed by the highest mean score of 4.46 for students' confidence level using the internet to find information. However, the results presented in this study confirmed that the computer/internet skills required were acceptable enough for students' readiness and knowledge to undergo online learning courses. Al-Hariri and Al-Hattami (2017) stated that the education system nowadays requires smartphones, software, and internet availability to introduce a new degree of responsiveness and flexibility in the learning process.

The Online Communication Self-Efficacy results show that students have participated moderately in online learning activities. They randomly expressed their views through online text messages/posting comments on various online platforms and were relatively confident communicating with lecturers and peers over them (M=3.48). Furthermore, they frequently post questions during online learning whenever they have queries (M=3.23), which is similar to the findings made by Chung et al. (2020a). It is also supported by Hung et al. (2010), McVay (2000, 2001), and Roper (2007) that students who can communicate during online learning have better results in communication self-efficacy, and they are most comfortable in expressing themselves by posting and asking questions. The average mean score for online communication self-efficacy in this study suggested that the students are ready to communicate with their lecturers and peers during online learning. To improve student participation, lecturers need to develop different communication skills through a private communication channel to encourage students' computer competencies, participation, and active communication in online learning (Blythe, 2001; Saadé et al., 2007).

The Motivation for Learning dimension results indicate that students were 'moderately keen' to learn new knowledge and ready to improve mistakes from previous studies when engaging in online learning (M=3.44). Thus, they like to share ideas with others while participating in forums/discussions online (M=3.38). Generally, the students rated (M=3.10) as moderately agreed on their readiness level for motivation to learn. The result is in line with a study conducted by Chung et al. (2020b), where respondents mainly agreed and were open to learning new ideas and sharing ideas with others in online learning (ML overall mean score of 3.79). The results slightly contradict Chung et al.'s (2020a) study when respondents' mean score of 3.71 shows that they are 'somewhat motivated' to undergo online learning courses. It attests that the students have low motivation when they must learn practical or technical subjects through online learning. These findings are aligned with the current study. The researchers remarked that the students with high motivation and good learning behavior have an increased tendency to attain the required skills competency (Tokan & Imakulata, 2019).

Table 3. Students' Perception toward Online Learning for Skills-Based Subjects

Items	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Self-Directed Learning		
I seek assistance when facing learning difficulties	3.67	0.748
I manage my time well while learning online	3.13	0.860
I set up my online learning goals	3.28	0.775
I have a high expectation for my learning performance	3.34	0.816
I carry out my study plan while learning online	3.28	0.722
Computer/Internet Self-Efficacy		
I feel confident in performing the basic function of Microsoft Office programs (M.S. Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint)	3.53	0.724
I feel confident in my knowledge and skill of managing software/apps for online learning.	3.41	0.724
I feel confident in using the internet to find the information and learning resource	3.80	0.766
Motivation for Learning		
I like to share my ideas with others while learning online in forum/discussion session	3.38	0.696
While learning online, I improve from my previous mistakes	3.44	0.796
I am open to a new idea when learning online	3.44	0.747
I have the motivation to do online learning for my skill-based subject	3.10	0.840
Online Communication Self Efficacy		
I post questions in online discussion	3.23	0.723
I express my thought through online text messages/posting comments	3.48	0.749
I feel confident in using online tools to communicate with others	3.48	0.806
Learner Control		
I can take notes while watching a video on the computer/laptop	3.53	0.790
In my studies, I am self-disciplined and find it easy to set aside and homework time	3.16	0.768
I am not distracted by other online activities (e.g., Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook) while learning online,	2.65	0.867
I can relate the content of short video clips (1-3 minutes typically) to the material I have read in books	3.43	0.698
I repeated the online learning materials based on my needs and time.	3.57	0.727

Note. For observed means, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Natural, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.
Reference: Output from the IBM SPSS

For Learner Control dimension, the results revealed that students take control while undergoing online learning as they can repeatedly watch and read the learning materials provided at any time (M=3.57). Thus, they also took notes while watching video clips on their computers (M=3.53), and they know how to relate the reading materials with the short video provided (M=3.43). However, when asked about self-discipline while learning online, students indicated that they have problems completing homework on their own (M=3.16), and at worse, they can be easily distracted by other online activities (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram)

(M=2.65). The result is in line with Chung et al. (2020a), which reported the lowest mean score of 2.63 for distraction by online and social media activities while students are learning online. As Purvis et al. (2016) stated, social media is often a distraction. This platform has so much content linked to so many different connections that it quickly distracts users from their original purpose of visiting or taking them into several unfruitful channels. Thus, Purvis et al. (2016) also added the concern of tutors regarding the students' focus issues that as soon as students were asked to download these online services, they will rapidly get hooked into following the latest 'trending' topic and be distracted from their learning activities. Winter et al. (2010) also reported that younger students enjoyed social media applications such as Messenger and Facebook during online learning. They use the same gadget for online classes and non-learning activities. Therefore, it enables them to switch between learning and non-learning activities.

Lastly, for the dimension of Self-Directed Learning, the respondents showed that they were moderately trying to seek assistance when facing problems during online learning (M=3.67). Thus, they are also 'somewhat enthusiastic' in carrying out their study plan (M=3.28), moderately expect while learning online (M=3.34) and setting up the online learning goals (M=3.28). However, the results from item four (4) SDL, "I manage my time well while learning online" (M=3.13), show that students find it 'moderately hard' to manage their time independently while learning online. Conversely, in the study by Chung et al. (2020a), respondents rated a high mean score of 4.31 on the same item. Thus, it shows that respondents could manage and utilise their time well while learning online. As Hart (2012) suggested, students who exhibit good time management skills and establish good relationships with other learners are more likely to succeed in their studies than those who do not.

In conclusion, the average mean score between 3.27 to 3.58 on a 5-point Likert scale indicated that the students are in medium readiness to do online learning for the skills-based courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding is slightly lower than the study conducted by Chung et al. (2020a). Students' online learning readiness for the Chemistry, Accounting, and Office System Management courses is above the average mean score between 3.49 – 4.23 (Chung et al., 2020a). Thus, in the second study conducted by Chung et al. (2020b), the findings also revealed that the average mean score was between 3.99 – 4.06, indicating that both the degree and diploma students' levels of readiness are above the medium to undergo Economics and Human Resource online learning courses. Consequently, in a study by Hung et al. (2010) on students' readiness for the five online courses (Calculus, Introduction to Environmental Protections, Taiwan Ecology and Life Chemistry) in Taiwan, students exhibited above medium levels of readiness to undergo online learning (M=3.75 to M=4.37).

4.4 The Overall Dimension Scores for Online Learning Readiness

The last objective of the study is to find the highest dimension score among the five OLRS dimensions for students' readiness level to undergo online learning hospitality skills-based courses. Overall, the results presented in Table 4 show that the highest dimension score of students' readiness to go through skill-based courses is from the Computer/Internet Self-efficacy, with an average mean score of (M=3.58). Followed by Online Communication Self-efficacy (M=3.40), Motivation for Learning, and Self-Directed Learning represented the same level of readiness (M=3.34). The lowest dimension score is Learner Control (M=3.24). The highest dimension score of students' readiness to enroll in skill-based courses is from the Computer/Internet Self-efficacy with the average mean score of (M=3.58), and the lowest average dimension means the score is the Learner Control (M=3.27).

Table 4. Mean for Online Learning Readiness Dimensions

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-directed learning	3.34	0.605
Computer/internet self-efficacy	3.58	0.615
Motivation for learning	3.34	0.592
Online communication self-efficacy	3.40	0.623
Learner control	3.27	0.543

The results indicate that respondents 'moderately agreed' that they are confident in using the internet to find information and learning resources (M=3.80 highest medium mean score for SDL). Plus, they disagreed that they are not easily distracted by other online activities while learning online (M=2.65, lowest mean score LC). These findings confirm the studies conducted by Chung et al. (2020a, 2020b) and Hung et al. (2010), which also found similar highest and lowest dimension outcomes on students' online readiness levels.

5. DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic had interrupted the ongoing education systems when schools and universities were forced to shut down. This situation poses significant challenges to our students and educators. Based on the findings and discussions above, it can be concluded that not all hospitality courses are suitable to be conducted via an online learning platform. Rahmawati (2021) stated that students view virtual learning as inconvenient and ineffective for practical-based courses commonly found in the Hotel Management program. They prefer the traditional face-to-face and hands-on practical classes. However, for safety reasons, due to the movement restriction order and the closure of educational institutions imposed by the government, everyone had to obey and follow the instructions given. Therefore, using the five dimensions of OLRS, educators can help students be more ready to participate in online learning, especially for skills-based courses. The focus should be on enhancing students' ability to control distractions and planning for self-directed online learning. Lecturers may need to improve their course structure, syllabus, and learning materials before students can direct themselves toward taking complete control of their learning. Thus, lecturers can help students establish their own time and information management skills and ensure adequate class participation. In addition, the instructors should create educational learning videos covering all the topics outlined in the syllabus. Also, additional pre-learning activities such as real-life, hands-on skills training should be included.

Educators can provide students with a pre-test to check their online learning ability before the class starts when dealing with relatively low learner control students. Next, instructors can instruct them to identify the learning and learning processes to meet their learning needs. Finally, lecturers can create a learning community through group discussions, experience sharing, and instant feedback to keep students interested. If students in their first year cannot manage their learning by themselves or are not able to learn if there is no direct (face-to-face) guidance from instructors, instructors are advised to organize and adequately re-design the course. Students may receive frequent reminders about the deadlines, requirements, and tests through emails or instant messages over cell phones. The students should be encouraged to seek assistance from lecturers during the learning process. While learning, instructors with students who seem easily distracted by other online activities are recommended to break down long

lessons into several online sessions, with short breaks in between. Another method is to incorporate a quick quiz at the end of each online learning session. This quiz needs to be made known to the students at the beginning of an online learning lesson to ensure students are more disciplined and focused.

6. CONCLUSION

Although the study has extended our current knowledge of practical-based online learning, several limitations should be addressed. Through a series of research conducted by scholars on online learning, it is understood that internet data and connectivity have become significant challenges for students to learn online, especially in rural areas. Therefore, further studies on online skills-based course challenges need to be conducted. Other aspects of online learning, such as the relationship of variables towards online learning efficiency, students' assessments, and performance, should also be examined. Moreover, future researchers are encouraged to investigate students and instructors in different states or countries to generalize the findings to the broader community. It would be more noteworthy if future studies could conduct a cross-comparison study between the various online learning platforms available such as Google Classroom and the Microsoft Teams. Other than that, a sequential pre- and post-study should be carried out before and after an online learning practical-based course. This could enhance our understanding about the effects of students' online learning readiness on their performance, or the efficiency of teaching methods and materials provided to the students for skill-based online learning courses.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

FMA and NAK wrote the introduction, literature review, conclusion, and recommendation sections. AS, MH and MIMZ wrote the data methodology section, collected, and refined the data, and performed the data analysis using SPSS statistical software. FMA and AS wrote the result and discussion sections. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Predicting Whistleblowing Intentions among Ar-Rahnu Institutions' Employees in Malaysia: Theory of Planned Behaviour Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Past research has indicated that whistleblowing serves as an effective tool to uncover violations in ethical practices. Nevertheless, few have studied whistleblowing in the context of Islamic pawn-broking scheme (Ar-Rahnu) despite the reported cases of unethical conducts perpetrated by its employees. Utilizing the Theory of Planned Behaviour, this study aims to identify the relationships among attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control with the whistleblowing intention of employees in Ar-Rahnu institutions in Malaysia. The questionnaires were distributed to 250 employees of Ar-Rahnu institutions across the country. The data was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling Version 3.3.3 (PLS-SEM V 3.3.3). The results revealed that subjective norms and perceived behavioural control do have significant positive relationships with whistleblowing intention. Meanwhile, the employee's attitude was found to have an insignificant effect on whistleblowing intention. Theoretically, the study's outcome may contribute to the existing body of literature in the areas of whistleblowing. The findings might shed some practical insights into designing a more effective internal control mechanism by the management of Ar-Rahnu and policymakers in Malaysia so that the good governance practices shall be uplifted throughout the entire system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fraudulent financial scandals and corruption remain a growing concern worldwide regardless of the stringent rules to enhance corporate governance. For instance, World Finance (2015) reported that Toshiba, a Japanese conglomerate, was involved in a controversy that led to the resignation of its CEO when it was found that the company inflated its earnings by $1.2 billion (Edwards, 2015). Meanwhile, Singapore called for more scrutiny on the country's corporate governance due to the case of the alleged use of forged documents by an oil trader to secure funding from HSBC Holding Plc (Yep, 2020). Furthermore, the finance director of King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang in Thailand reportedly embezzled 1.5 billion Baht (USD 52 million) in a significant financial scandal (Terdpaopong & Trimek, 2015). Apart from that, the corruption scandals involving state-owned insurer PT Jiwasraya have resulted in Indonesia's most significant public losses in its history, amounting to Rp 16.8 trillion (USD1.15 million) worth of embezzlement (Jakarta Post, 2020). Malaysia is not spared either, where a well-known corporate scandal has recently hit the country in the form of 1 Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), with RM4.5 billion laundered through a series of complex agreements and phony shell companies with bank accounts in Singapore, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the United States (Ali, 2018).

Financial scandals involving corporate giants such as Enron, WorldCom and Tyco were mainly exposed when their employees blew the whistle (Ab Ghani, 2013). Whistleblowing refers to the exposure of an individual or group incorporated as an organizational member concerning unlawful, immoral, or other illegal conduct (Tarjo et al., 2019). It is an effective control mechanism for detecting fraud in organizations (Rustiarini & Merawati, 2021). The act of whistleblowing may promote good governance and improve transparency and accountability (Pillay et al., 2018). Due to this, the government sees that whistleblowing should become an instrument of accountability and risk management to protect the interests of shareholders, organizations, and the public (Yatim, 2009; Tarjo et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2017). Employees play a significant role in identifying fraud within organizations since they might be the first to notice any possible wrongdoings (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009; Micelli et al., 2009). In line with this, the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners reported in 2020 that employees did 50% of occupational fraud disclosures. However, whistleblowing is rather challenging to implement because employees may opt to remain silent despite their awareness of the misconduct since whistleblowers are often subjected to demotion, dismissal, and safety threats (Near & Miceli, 1996; Chang et al., 2017; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Schwartz, 2016).

Studies investigating whistleblowing intentions of individuals have been on the ascendency. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) seems to be an adequate theoretical framework for predicting one's intentions regarding ethical behavior (Buchan 2005; Chang 1998; Mcmillan & Conner, 2003). From the perspective of the TPB, intentions are influenced by three determinants: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Azjen, 1991). First is attitude, which refers to an individual's positive or negative reaction to a specific object, person, entity, event, or behavior (Ajzen & Fisbien, 2005). Several researchers concluded that if people have a positive attitude toward whistleblowing, they will agree that it has positive effects and that it is essential to act against misconduct (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009). The second is subjective norm, which reflects an individual's normative beliefs about approval or disapproval by influential referent individuals or groups about a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). When an authority, organization, or key members of a group approves or supports the intention to report wrongdoing, observers are more likely to report the misconduct (Trongmateerut & Sweeney, 2013). The third determinant is perceived behavioral control, defined as the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior (Ajzen, 2005).

In Malaysia, whistleblowing is not a unique method of revealing organizational misconduct (Ngui, 2005); hence, the Whistleblowing Protection Act 2010 was enacted by the Malaysian government to encourage whistleblowers to step forward with any information on alleged organizational misconduct (Yekta, Ahmad, & Kaur, 2010). While numerous studies focused on whistleblowing in various industries using Ajzen (1991) TPB, the number of studies on the whistleblowing intention in Ar-Rahnu institutions is still limited. Ar-Rahnu is an Islamic credit institution encompassing all Muslim employees who must adequately conform to the basic ethical conduct outlined by the institutions. In this regard, the employees should be allowed to express their concerns about any wrongdoing, especially when their everyday operations entail assets (gold and cash). Unfortunately, there have been reports of Ar-Rahnu employees engaging in unethical behavior such as fraud and breach of trust. For instance, in 2017, a former Ar-Rahnu operations manager was charged with 28 violations of trust charges amounting to RM440,409 (Berita Harian, 2017), while Ar-Rahnu Xchange's former finance firm executive was indicted with 31 forgeries and breach of trust charges amounting to RM494,554 in 2019 (Berita Harian, 2019). Given these issues, the current study aims to address the gap by identifying the relationships between attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control with the whistleblowing intention of employees in Ar-Rahnu institutions in Malaysia.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. The following section provides context for the current study by describing the TPB in detail, followed by prior literature and the development of hypotheses. The research methodology section describes research methods, detailed sample explanation, collection of data as well as the regression models that are to be examined to achieve the desired results. The following section discusses the findings and discussion while the final section concludes the study's outcome.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The TPB is a psychological philosophy encompassing values and actions for understanding human conduct and is well-known for its ability to successfully anticipate and explain the elements that influence whistleblowing intentions (Zakaria et al., 2016). According to Ajzen (1991), the three main factors influencing an individual's intention to perform any action are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude towards behavior denotes how an individual evaluates a particular behavior favorably or unfavorably. In contrast, subjective norms characterize a social factor in the perceived social pressure of whether to perform such behavior. Perceived behavioral control indicates how an individual perceives the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, presumably reflecting on past experiences and anticipated obstacles. Individual intention to achieve a particular behavior is associated with a more significant positive attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Since this idea impacts employee morale and behavior, the current study sets out to identify the factors (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) outlined in the TPB that influence the whistleblowing intention of Ar-Rahnu employees.

2.2 Whistleblowing Intention

Whistleblowing intention refers to the likelihood that the member of an organization would expose fraudulent or unethical conduct to parties inside the association that are readily able to repair such misconduct (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). However, "universal whistleblowing" has no precise meaning (Jubb, 1999). While Farooqi et al. (2017) defined whistleblowing as the disclosure of an unlawful, unethical, or illegitimate conduct by members

of an organization to individuals or organizations who might be affected, whistleblowing intention, on the other hand, is defined as the actual whistleblowing behavior to be performed by an individual (Chiu, 2003). Since numerous researchers asserted that forcing actual whistleblowing behavior is complex, studies have mainly examined whistleblowing intentions rather than actual whistleblowing behavior (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009; Suyatno, 2018; Zakaria et al., 2020).

The two perspectives on whistleblowing are purpose and actual actions (Tarjo et al., 2019). As indicated by Ajzen (1991), the actual actions of individuals can be described by recognizing individual intention or tendency to demonstrate a particular behavior. While observations of the actual behavior can be rather difficult (Awang & Ismail, 2018), it is possible to define the behavior by examining the possibility of its appearance. Besides, since the individual intention is a predictor of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), whistleblowing can further be defined by the reason for which it is done (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009), owing to the possible link between purpose and the actual behavior (Chang et al., 2017). According to Ab Ghani (2013), since whistleblowing intention is treated as the dependent variable in this study instead of actual whistleblowing behavior, the issue surrounding behavioral intention must, therefore, be considered. Ajzen's (1991) TPB also indicated behavioral intention as a strong predictor of actual behavior (Chiu, 2003). In other words, the strongest predictor of actions is the intention, which cognitively represents individual readiness to execute a specific action that is recognized as the immediate behavioral precedence (Ajzen, 1991).

2.3 Attitude and Whistleblowing Intention

Attitude is the first factor influencing whistleblowing intention, which refers to how an individual positively or negatively reacts to a specific object, organization, or activity (Suyatno, 2018). Distinguished assumptions about the behavioral counterpart and the contextual appraisal of consequences form the basis of attitude (Suyatno, 2018; Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009), which estimates any questionable behavior and its impacts (Ab Ghani, 2013). Whistle-blowers value whistleblowing as an appropriate action instead of passive observers (Near & Miceli, 1996). If individuals have a positive attitude toward whistleblowing, they will likely agree with its positive influence and importance in battling corruption (Suyatno, 2018; Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009). However, a positive attitude towards whistleblowing does not mean that when the time comes to whistleblow, everyone will be able to disclose the misconduct (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009). Only a few people act accordingly. Individual judgments or evaluations of whistleblowing's good or bad consequences may be the subject of whistleblower attitudes. If one believes that whistleblowing only causes a harmful impact, then one will continue to resist it; however, if whistleblowing is deemed a worthwhile action, one will prefer doing it.

Several empirical studies have found that attitude is an essential predictor of ethical intentions in general. For example, Ab Ghani (2013) investigated the impact of attitude on the whistleblowing intentions of 311 personnel of Malaysian publicly listed manufacturing corporations. The findings indicated that the more positive the attitude was towards whistleblowing, the more likely the whistleblowing intention. Similar results are reported among internal auditors of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Indonesia in a study conducted by Harsanti et al. (2016). In addition, Alleyne et al. (2018) studied a sample of public accountants in Barbados and documented that attitude significantly influences both internal and external whistleblowing intentions. Likewise, Tarjo et al. (2019) examined the influence of attitude on whistleblowing intentions among 112 East Java Bank employees in Indonesia, which indicated a significant relationship between the variables. Finally, Dalan et al. (2019) explored some of the critical antecedents that drive non-executive public servants'

whistleblowing intention in Kuala Lumpur and revealed that attitude significantly impacts whistleblowing behavior. Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1:   Attitudes positively influence employees' whistleblowing intention.

2.4 Subjective Norms and Whistleblowing Intention

Subjective norms are the second factor influencing whistleblowing intention, which denotes the perceived social pressure of whether to perform a particular behavior (Zakaria et al., 2020; Tarjo et al., 2019; Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) explains that social norms represent an individual's normative ideas about the approval or rejection of a specific action by relevant referent groups or individuals. In other words, subjective norms refer to individual beliefs or knowledge of a particular behavior from the perspectives of others (Park & Blenkinsopp, 2009). Furthermore, subjective norms are defined as a function of expectation and value, determined by normative beliefs about what others believe an individual is capable of, multiplied by the individual's incentive to comply (Ab Ghani, 2013). In this regard, when an official, agency, or significant members of a party acknowledge or encourage the intention to investigate fraud, observers are more prone to report the misconduct (Trongmateerut & Sweeney, 2013). This has also been supported by prior literature (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Near & Miceli, 1995).

Subjective norms can regulate the link between the intention to report misconduct and the actual whistleblowing behavior (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). People live in various contexts in specific communities, and such things are typically determined in society to suit an individual within a group by performing or not performing anything. The individual might be excluded from the group or vice versa. As such, individual behaviors are influenced by norms when describing the habits expected of them and a group. When a benchmarked group expresses an opinion or implicitly chooses to whistleblow, then members of the social group would desire to do so, and while they are prominent in a social group, they consent and conduct as per the benchmarked average (Feldman & Lobel, 2010; Seifert, Sweeney, Joireman & Thornton, 2010).

Existing studies generally suggest that subjective norms affect the whistleblowing intentions of individuals. Richardson et al. (2012) document that the subjective norm predicts whistleblowing intentions of students, whereas Harsanti et al. (2016) found similar results among internal auditors in Indonesia's SOEs. A recent study of accounting students from the University of Ghana Business School revealed that subjective norms are critical predictors of internal whistleblowing intentions (Owusu et al., 2020). Another study by Karlina et al. (2021) involving the employees of insurance companies in Palembang revealed similar findings. On the contrary, the subjective norm has no significant relationship with whistleblowing intention towards whistleblowing behavior among the Malaysian civil servants and government auditors working on the auditor board in Bali, as discovered by Lazim et al. (2022) and Rustiarini and Sunarsih (2017) respectively. Given this ambiguity, this study hypothesizes that:

H2:   Subjective norms positively influence employees' whistleblowing intention.

2.5 Perceived Behavioural Control and Whistleblowing Intention

Perceived behavioral control is the third factor influencing whistleblowing intention, which refers to how an individual perceives the ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior

(Zakaria et al., 2020; Tarjo et al., 2019; Zakaria et al., 2016; Ajzen & Fisbein, 2005). An individual is more likely to blow the whistle when that person perceives that they can successfully overcome hindrances associated with the act of reporting wrongdoings (Park and Blenkinsopp, 2009). The two aspects of perceived behavioral control are control values and behavioral control (Ab Ghani, 2013). According to Madden and Ajzen (1986), control values are linked to unique ideas about the variables that may encourage or discourage certain behaviors. For instance, if employees report misconduct, they may face harassment and management retaliation, but they would also weigh the aftermath of whistleblowing. However, leveraging social media for whistleblowing might decrease such consequences (Latan et al., 2020). On the other hand, Ajzen (1991) mentioned that behavior control denotes individual belief in particular behaviors.

Previous studies have found support for perceived behavioral control in predicting the intention to perform a particular behavior. For instance, Harsanti et al. (2016) found that perceived behavioral control positively influences the whistleblowing intentions of internal auditors. Also, Park and Blenkinsopp (2009) reported that perceived behavioral control has a significant positive effect on the internal whistleblowing intentions of police officers. Also, Alleyne et al. (2018) found a positive and significant relationship between public accountants' internal and external whistleblowing intentions and perceived behavioral control. Based on a past study on whistleblowing challenges in Nigeria by Okafor et al. (2020), the lack of understanding and fear of physical harm would weaken the effectiveness of whistleblowing, although it is recognized as an accountability tool to combat fraud and corruption. Likewise, Mansor et al. (2021) investigated external auditors' whistleblowing intentions by applying the moderated multicomponent of TPB and revealed positive relationships between perceived behavioral control and whistleblowing intentions. A more recent study by Tripermata et al. (2022) has demonstrated that perceived behavioral control positively and significantly affects the whistleblowing intention of 236 respondents: the Head of the Finance Subdivision and Head of the Reporting Planning Subdivision and the finance staff in Indonesia. Therefore, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3:   Perceived behavioral control positively influences employees'whistleblowing intention.

Overall, a conceptual framework has been constructed in this study to depict the relationships among attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior as the independent variables of this study, with the dependent variable, whistleblowing intention (refer Figure 1).
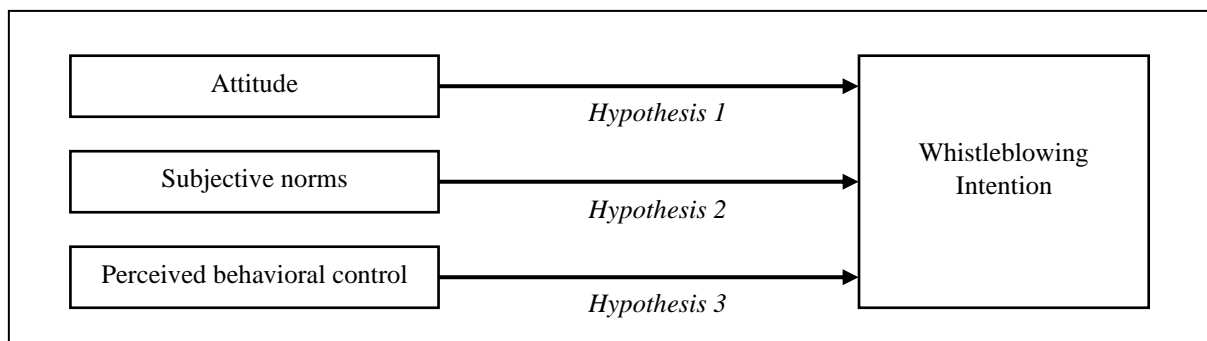

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHOD

The current study employed a survey method using questionnaires adopted from Park and Blenkinsopp's (2009) study on whistleblowing intention among police officers. The questionnaire consists of a few questions measuring whistleblowing intention and TPB's three determinants: attitude, subject norm, and perceived behavior control. The questionnaires in the current study are based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 for "Strongly Disagree"; 2 for "Disagree"; 3 for "Neither Agree nor Disagree"; 4 for "Agree"; and 5 for "Strongly Agree". Approximately, Ar-Rahnu institutions in Malaysia consist of 85 branches with about four to five employees per branch. Hence, the current study estimates that there are about 340 Ar-Rahnu employees. Before distributing the questionnaires to the respondents, the panel expert reviewed the questionnaires. The questionnaire was also distributed to the senior manager of the pawn business to test the validity instrument. The result of Cronbach Alpha showed that the finding was at an acceptable level.

All employees in the branch were given the opportunity to participate in this research. The respondents were given a link through WhatsApp and email to answer the questionnaires within two weeks. If they did not return them after the period, a notification was sent to remind them to respond and return the questionnaires. After two weeks, only 157 respondents returned the questionnaires through a Google form. The Cronbach's alpha values for all variables with multi-items ranged from 0.75-0.96, thus suggesting the reliability of the questionnaires (Kline, 2013). Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size, the current study required sample size of 181. Besides, as Roscoe (1975) suggested, a sample size of greater than 30 but less than 500 is adequate for most studies. Thus, based on the rule of thumb, each sub-category or independent variable requires a minimum sample size of 30. Through a Google Form link forwarded via email and WhatsApp, the researchers personally distributed 250 questionnaires to Ar-Rahnu employees, the respondents. A response rate of 157 has been recorded, which exceeds the 30% threshold as recommended by Frohlich (2002).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 shows the respondents socio-demographic profiles. Eighty-two (52.2%) respondents from this study were males, while others were females. As for marital status, most of the respondents are married, with 126 respondents (80.2%) married and only 31 respondents (19.8%) still single. There are 48 respondents (30.5%) aged between 20 to 30 years, 91 respondents (57.9%) aged between 31 to 40 years, 12 respondents (7%) aged between 41 to 50 years, and only seven respondents (4.6%) aged between 51 to 60 years old. The education level section revealed that 62 respondents (39.5%) are degree holders, followed by 60 respondents (38.2%) having STPM or Diploma, 33 respondents (21%) having SPM certificate, and only two respondents (1.3%) are postgraduate holders. Based on working experience, 62 respondents (39.5%) had working experience from 1 to 5 years, followed by 53 respondents (33.7%) from 6 to 10 years, and 24 respondents (15.3%) from 11 to 15 years. Ten respondents (6.4%) had working experience of more than 15 years, and only eight respondents (5.1%) had working experience of less than a year.

Table 1. Respondents Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	82	52.2
Female	75	47.8
Marital Status:		
Single	31	19.8
Married	126	80.2
Age:		
20 to 30 years	48	30.5
31 to 40 years	91	57.9
41 to 50 years	11	7.0
51 to 60 years	7	4.6
Education Level:		
SPM	33	21.0
STPM/Diploma	60	38.2
Degree/Professional	62	39.5
Postgraduate	2	1.3
Working Experience:		
Less than 1 year	8	5.1
1 to 5 years	62	39.5
6 to 10 years	53	33.7
11 to 15 years	24	15.3
16 years above	10	6.4
Locality:		
East Coast	90	57.3
North Coast	26	16.5
South Coast	5	3.2
West Coast	15	9.6
East Malaysia	21	13.4
Position:		
Branch Manager	57	36.3
Assistant Branch Manager	30	19.1
Valuer	50	31.8
Teller	20	12.8

In terms of geographical location, more than half of the respondents were from East Coast (57.3%), 26 respondents (16.5%) from North Coast, 21 respondents (13.4%) from East Malaysia, 15 respondents (9.6%) from West Coast and six respondents (3.2%) from South Coast. Fifty-seven of the respondents (36.3%) held the position of branch manager, followed by 50 respondents (31.8%) were valuers, 30 respondents (19.1%) were assistant branch managers, and 20 respondents (12.8%) were counter tellers.

Table 2 presents the descriptive result in measuring the research variables. Mean and standard deviation describe the level of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control among Ar-Rahnu employees towards whistleblowing intention. According to Othman and Ishak (2011), the mean score between 1.00 to 2.00 is considered low, 2.01 to 3.00 medium-low, 3.01 to 4.00 medium-high and 4.01 to 5.00 is high. In this study, mean scores for variables are acceptable.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variable Dimension

Variable	Dimension	Mean	Median	Std Deviation
Attitude	Behavioural beliefs	4.25	4.50	0.715
	Outcome evaluation	4.24	4.40	0.699
Subjective norms	Motivation to comply	3.66	3.80	0.865
	Normative belief	3.60	3.60	0.929
Perceived behavioural control	Belief in control factor	2.98	3.00	0.937
	Evaluation of control factor	2.93	3.00	0.968
Whistleblowing Intention	Internal intention	3.70	3.75	0.756
	External intention	3.00	3.16	0.872

4.2 Common Method Variance

There was a possibility of common method variance due to the nature of the data. A bias or measurement error in a self-reported data set is known as the Common Method Variance (CMV). The study adopted the statistical method to overcome this issue, which is a full collinearity test. As Kock and Lynn (2012) explained, the maximum collinearity test was proposed as a systematic method for assessing both vertical and lateral collinearity simultaneously. Variance inflation factors (VIFs) are checked as part of the procedure. VIFs greater than 3.3 indicate pathological collinearity and that a model could be contaminated by common method variance (Kock, 2015). Therefore, if all VIFs from a complete collinearity test are equal to or less than 3.3, the model is free of common method bias. Table 3 shows the latent variables in the model with VIFs less than 3.3. Therefore, the model is free from common method variance as proposed by Kock and Lynn (2012).

Table 3. Full Collinearity of Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs)

CMV	WBI	ATT	SNM	PBC
VIFs	1.357	1.370	1.491	1.169

WBI = Whistleblowing Intention, ATT = Attitude, SNM = Subjective norms, PBC = Perceived behavioural control.

4.3 Assessment of Measurement

To examine the research model, the Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis technique was employed using the SmartPLS 3 Version 3.3.3. It uses two-stage analytical techniques to refine all structural equation models, testing the measurement model as recommended by Hair et al. (2014). Before structural modeling, this study would evaluate the latent constructs model for dimensionality, validity, and reliability. The measurement model used in this study included four constructs which are Whistleblowing Intention (WBI), Attitude (ATT), Subjective Norms (SNM), and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC). In addition, the loading associated latent variable must be calculated and compared to a threshold in assessing model reliability. Generally, a loading higher than 0.6 for indicator reliability is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2019). Meanwhile, a loading that is lower than 0.4 indicates that an item should be removed, and items with a loading of 0.4-0.6 should be considered if they decrease the composite reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above the threshold (Hair et al., 2010). As a result, Table 5 illustrates that most Factor Loading, CR, and AVE are satisfied.

4.4 Validity Assessment of Measurement Model

Convergent and discriminant validity is used to determine validity. The degree to which the scale compares favourably with other tests of the same structures is known as convergent validity (Marcoulides, 2014). The factor loading, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) are typically used to determine the measurement model's convergent validity. All the values were above 0.5, showing the convergent validity of the model. Convergent validity can be evaluated by examining the loading ≥ 0.5), AVE ≥ 0.5, and CR ≥ 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4 shows that the factor loading threshold level results are above 0.5, CR more than 0.7 and AVE greater than 0.5, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

On top of the assessment of convergent validity, the study also evaluated the discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is the degree to which a measure diverges from another measure whose underlying construct is conceptually unrelated to it. Discriminant validity can be evaluated by examining Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2014). Assessing HTMT as a criterion involves comparing predefined thresholds. If the value of HTMT is higher than this threshold, one can conclude that discriminant validity is lacking. Hair et al. (2019) proposes a value of 0.90. The measurement model's discriminant validity assessment using the HTMT ratio indicates that the model possesses acceptable discriminant validity, as shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Factor Loading, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Constructs	Dimension	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Attitude	Behavioural beliefs	ATB1	0.814	0.978	0.979	0.725
		ATB2	0.857			
		ATB3	0.836			
		ATB4	0.826			
		ATB5	0.916			
		ATB6	0.838			
		ATB7	0.818			
		ATB8	0.922			
		ATB9	0.862			
	Outcome evaluation	ATO1	0.813			
		ATO2	0.848			
		ATO3	0.888			
		ATO4	0.776			
		ATO5	0.920			
		ATO6	0.866			
		ATO7	0.794			
		ATO8	0.860			
		ATO9	0.856			
Subjective norms	Motivation to comply	SM1	0.602	0.964	0.974	0.731
		SM2	0.845			
		SM3	0.686			
		SM4	0.696			
		SM5	0.843			
		SM6	0.818			
		SM7	0.820			
	Normative belief	SN1	0.693			
		SN2	0.847			
		SN3	0.771			
		SN4	0.684			
		SN5	0.868			
		SN6	0.771			
		SN7	0.902			
		SN8	0.886			
		SN9	0.904			
		SN10	0.883			
Perceived behavioural control	Belief in control factor	PB1	0.738	0.972	0.968	0.640
		PB2	0.836			
		PB3	0.833			
		PB4	0.856			
		PB5	0.865			
		PB6	0.835			
	Evaluation of control factor	PE1	0.892			
		PE2	0.905			
		PE3	0.920			
		PE4	0.906			
		PE5	0.890			
		PE6	0.842			
		PE7	0.792			
		PE8	0.844			
Whistleblowing Intention	Internal intention	WI1	0.754	0.800	0.859	0.510
		WI2	0.784			
		W3	0.734			
		W4	0.836			
	External intention	WE1	0.588			
		WE2	0.542			

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

Constructs	WBI	ATT	SNM	PBC
WBI				
ATT	0.333			
SNM	0.409	0.541		
PBC	0.408	0.084	0.138	

WBI = Whistleblowing Intention, ATT = Attitude, SNM = Subjective norms, PBC = Perceived behavioural control.

4.5 *Assessment of Structural Model*

Table 6 shows the Structural Equation Modelling statistical results for the study. The R^2 value for WBI is 0.249, indicating that the 24.9% of the variance ATT, SNM and PBC is explained by the Whistleblowing Intention (WBI). Since the value of R^2 is considerably low, it indicated that the model provides little predictive value.

Table 6. Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing

Constructs	β	S.E.	*t*-value	*p*-value	R^2	VIF	Decision
Hypothesis 1	0.108	0.084	1.077	0.282	0.249	1.358	Unsupported
Hypothesis 2	0.337	0.086	3.936	0.000		1.015	Supported
Hypothesis 3	0.300	0.074	3.987	0.000		1.374	Supported

As proposed by the literature, besides the blindfolding procedure, it is also beneficial to run the PLS prediction (Hair et al., 2019). The model assumes to have less error in predicting performance if the Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE), Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE) values in the PLS model have lower values compared to the Linear Model (LM) and the Q^2 value for PLS is higher than LM. As shown in Table 7, all the values fulfil the requirements. Hence it establishes a path model that improves the predictive performance of the available indicator data.

Table 7. PLS Predict

	PLS Model				Linear Model			
	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q^2_predict	RMSE	MAE	MAPE	Q^2_predict
IWI1	0.850	0.691	21.549	0.073	0.936	0.693	21.788	-0.126
IWI2	0.842	0.679	21.194	0.102	0.983	0.727	23.787	-0.244
IWI3	0.824	0.666	19.539	0.085	0.847	0.616	19.576	0.034
IWI4	0.081	0.666	20.371	0.111	0.916	0.686	20.518	-0.138
EWI1	1.143	0.940	54.779	0.141	1.223	0.953	55.083	0.016
EWI2	1.292	1.139	69.862	0.083	1.445	1.166	69.897	-0.147

5. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis H1 proposed the relationship between attitude and whistleblowing intention among Ar-Rahnu employees. The statistical results reveal a statistically insignificant but positive association (*p-value = 0.282*) which causes H1 to be rejected. Previous literature suggested that attitude seems to be one of the major factors for deciding on whistleblowing, as Dozier and Miceli (1985) reported. In addition, Ajzen (1991) TPB also indicated that attitude is an important determinant of whistleblowing intention (Suyatno, 2018). However, the study's empirical result indicates the opposite when it comes to intention, and a positive attitude may not drive the employees to whistleblowing. The finding is supported by Park and Blenkinsopp (2009), who recommended that the relationship between the attitude and the intention to whistleblowing is not essential to whistleblowing sentiment when their study revealed no association between attitude and whistleblowing intention of police officers in South Korea. The minimal relation between attitude and intention reveals that behaviour does not influence whistleblowing by Ar-Rahnu employees. The results contradicted the findings of Zakaria et al. (2016), where it was discovered that the association between attitude and whistleblowing intention is significant but in a negative way. The Ar-Rahnu Institutions need to give some intensive training to their employees so that the employees will have a better understanding and knowledge of whistleblower attitude. Yana et al. (2020) stated that organization also needs to introduce a new reward scheme for the committed employee and support the implementation of whistleblowing.

Despite the insignificance of association between attitude towards whistleblowing intention in H1, hypothesis H2 posited that the subjective norm would significantly influence whistleblowing intention among the Ar-Rahnu employees. Subjective norms are a social pressure perceived as performing or not behaving. Based on the statistical results, hypothesis H2 is accepted with a significant *p-value of* 0.000. The study's finding is consistent with Zakaria et al. (2020), where subjective norms significantly predict whistleblowing intention. Park and Blenkinsopp (2009), amongst other factors, argued that subjective norm is the most critical factor when deciding to report wrongdoing. Effective whistleblowers should request the opinions of others and balance risks and advantages before blowing the whistle (Richardson et al., 2012). Hence, the greater the power of the referent classes, the greater one's incentive to imitate, and therefore the greater one's desire to whistle blow. Hypothesis H3 posited that perceived behavioral control significantly influences whistleblowing intention among the Ar-Rahnu employees. Based on the statistical results, PBC was associated considerably with WBI with a *p-value of 0.000* which supports Park and Blenkinsopp's (2007) finding that behavioral influence, viewed by the public, affects the intentions of internal and external whistleblowing.

The results may urge greater transparency and good governance in organisations for regulation, policymakers, organizations, and management when whistleblowing. The study revealed that employees might intend to blow the whistle internally. Thus, organisations need to set up an effective monitoring channel and regulations to promote internal tip-off. The organization may develop internal policies, hotlines, boxes of grievances, recognitions, awards, precautions and so forth to motivate employees to do the right things when it comes to any unethical conduct of their co-workers in the organization. The employees should be encouraged to act according to their conscience. In addition to providing adequate security by organizational procedures, it is the responsibility of employees who report misconduct. For instance, there should be policies to ban the repressive treatment of whistleblowers and recompense them internally for disclosing any misconduct. The policy to encourage internal whistles has two additional advantages for organisations. First, it enhances risk control by reducing the probability of misconduct being undetected. Secondly, it can decrease the risk of external whistleblowing,

which is usually seen to have a detrimental impact on the prestige of an organisation by increasing the chances for internal whistleblowing. If an organization has adopted successful internal monitoring practices, it will discourage external reporting. The management must have these components formulated in a whistleblowing scheme, thus establishing an atmosphere of honesty and accountability that allows workers to whistleblow.

This current study supports the TPB, of which the framework is appropriate to predict whistleblowing intention. Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are significant factors of whistleblowing intention among employees in Ar-Rahnu institutions. This shall add to the body of knowledge in academic literature. The findings apply to other contexts and countries and can be used in future studies. This study also supports previous research (Zakaria et al., 2020; Suyatno, 2018; Liu, Liao & Wei, 2015) that investigated similar variables.

6. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the study applied Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior as a framework in investigating factors influencing whistleblowing intention among employees of Ar-Rahnu institutions in Malaysia. Three main independent variables of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control were hypothesized to have significant relationship with whistleblowing intention. The study results revealed only subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are significant predictors of whistleblowing intention, while employees' attitude was insignificantly associated with whistleblowing intention.

The study has some limitations due to the lack of control variables taken into consideration upon performing analysis which may cause unclear identification of the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable. In addition, the sample taken in the study may not be representative of the whole population of employees working in Ar-Rahnu institutions. Therefore, as a suggestion for future research, it might be helpful to include some control variables that may affect the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Also, increasing the sample size might lead to a better generalization of the study results. It is hoped that this study's results will help better understand the factors influencing whistleblowing intention among employees in Malaysia.

As for Ar-Rahnu, it is hoped that these findings are helpful to the management, the first point of contact in these situations. Should they understand the factors influencing whistleblowing, they would listen more closely to the reporting employees. Listening would show that they are open to being challenged and wish to be informed of any problems in the future before they escalate. Additionally, it could design effective whistleblowing systems and environments in organizations. The company also needs to implement effective training and introduce a new scheme or rewards to the employees committed to and supporting the implementation of whistleblowing. As for the regulators and policymakers, understanding the influencing factors of whistleblowing could be used to enhance law enforcement in terms of protection and support towards whistleblowers when they decide to expose frauds and ethical misconduct of people inside any organization.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

WAWM performed the data collection and refinement. YHMJ wrote the data methodology and data analysis sections. WNBWMN wrote the literature review and development of hypothesis sections. SNAAR wrote the literature review and conclusion sections and oversaw editing the paper. WMWM wrote the introduction and oversaw language editing.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Survey Instrument

Variable	Dimension	Item	Code	Cronbach Alpha
Attitude	Behavioural belief *(If you reported wrongdoing, how important do you think the following consequences will be to you?)*	Control of corruption.	ATB1	0.978
		One's duty to protect the public interest.	ATB2	
		One's duty as an employee.	ATB3	
		Moral satisfaction.	ATB4	
		Sustainability of organization.	ATB5	
		One's conscience.	ATB6	
		Moral agent.	ATB7	
		Management tool to protect organization.	ATB8	
		Make people at work liable for their wrongdoing.	ATB9	
	Outcome Evaluation *(If you reported wrongdoing, how important do you think the following consequences will be to you?)*	Control of corruption.	ATO1	
		One's duty to protect the public interest.	ATO2	
		One's duty as an employee.	ATO3	
		Moral satisfaction.	ATO4	
		Sustainability of organization.	ATO5	
		One's conscience.	ATO6	
		Moral agent.	ATO7	
		Management tool to protect organization.	ATO8	
		Make people at work liable for their wrongdoing.	ATO9	
Subjective norms	Motivation to comply *(The motivation to comply is the perceived pressure one feels to act in accordance with others' expectations)*	Members of family.	SM1	0.964
		Subordinates.	SM2	
		Friends.	SM3	
		Neighbours.	SM4	
		Acquaintances.	SM5	
		Public moral.	SM6	
		Government/ Policy makers.	SM7	
	Outcome Evaluation *(If you reported wrongdoing, how important do you think the following consequences will be to you?)*	Members of family.	SN1	
		Co-workers.	SN2	
		Immediate supervisor.	SN3	
		Subordinates.	SN4	
		Top management.	SN5	
		Friends.	SN6	
		Neighbours.	SN7	
		Acquaintances.	SN8	
		Public moral.	SN9	
		Government/ Policy makers.	SN10	
Perceived behavioral control	Belief in control factor *(If you are an employee reporting wrongdoing in an organization, how likely do you think the following are?)*	My reporting won't make any difference.	PB1	0.972
		Harassment	PB2	
		Demotion	PB3	
		Isolation	PB4	
		Termination	PB5	
		Close monitoring	PB6	
		Breach of duty of loyalty	PB7	
	Evaluation in control factor *(If you are an employee reporting wrongdoing in an organization, how likely do you think the following are?)*	The organization ignores the reporting	PE1	
		My reporting won't make any difference.	PE2	
		Harassment	PE3	
		Demotion	PE4	
		Isolation	PE5	
		Termination	PE6	
		Close monitoring	PE7	
		Breach of duty of loyalty	PE8	
Whistleblowing Intention	Internal intention *(If you found wrongdoing in your workplace, how hard do you try to do the following?)*	Report to the appropriate people within organization.	WI1	0.800
		Let upper level of management know about it.	WI2	
		Tell supervisor.	WI3	
		Report to ethics officer or disciplinary committee.	WI4	
	External intention *(If you found wrongdoing in your workplace, how hard do you try to do the following?)*	Report to the appropriate authority outside the organization.	WE1	
		Use reporting channels outside of the organization.	WE2	

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The Effect of Endorsement Appeals in Advertisement on Food Buyers' Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

Advertising is one of the modes of communication that influences the actions of the targeted market. It is crucial that companies understand the marketing communication tools that best suit their target customers. This study aims to determine the influence of endorsement appeals in advertising on the purchasing intention of Malaysia's food buyers. A quantitative study was conducted on 385 respondents, and Likert-scale survey questionnaires were used to collect the data. Resultantly, attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and credibility of endorsement appeals influenced the purchase intention of food buyers in Malaysia. In the present sad and anxiety-driven world, delivering emotional and relatable feelings and conveying messages in an understanding and familiar manner is gaining popularity and mental acceptance among Malaysians. These findings support an underlying conviction that endorsement appeals could influence the purchase intention of food buyers. Apart from watching and enjoying the advertisement, the content also created an emotional advertising appeal, which helped to attract buyers. Surprisingly, the viewers preferred buying the same product or service as a form of achievement which resulted from the emotional advertising appeal. This proves that the marketers prefer the emotional advertising appeal to the rational advertising appeal. Conclusively, this study broadens the knowledge of assessments and impacts of emotional and logical appeals appearing either in print or online advertisements.

1. INTRODUCTION

Companies have adopted various strategies to aid the promotion of their products. Among the strategies adopted are media advertising and promotional advertising. Grigaliunaite and Pileliene (2016) stated that companies need to identify and focus on the factors that affect advertisement effectiveness in an evolving competition-based market economy. Additionally, conventional marketing and neuromarketing research approaches have been employed to assess the effects of various advertising appeals on advertising effectiveness. Hence, a model for this has been created. Thus, this study aims to identify the endorsement and emotional appeals in advertising that influence the purchase intention of food buyers.

In the food industry, consumer behavior plays an important role in ensuring that funds are raised to meet their needs. This should be seen as a requirement regardless of whether the mechanism of consumption exists. Consumers may acquire their needs by purchasing goods available either in or outside the market. They could also acquire their needs through self-supplying or receiving donations from legal persons or natural persons. This general remark is specifically vital about food. Some issues discussed in this study include the location of food purchase, factors that might influence the decision to purchase the food, purchaser reaction, and purchaser preference in catering services. According to empirical research conducted by Jovanovic et al. (2016), some forms of appeals in creative advertising strategies are either efficient or vice versa. Moreover, marketing professionals accepted that applying creative skills by copywriters and artists when presenting an advert is a form of artistic expression. They also viewed such creative skills as advertising dimensions, where their success and effectiveness are not observable.

In the competitive market, particularly the online market, it is highly recommended to investigate the impacts of advertising appeals on consumer purchasing intention for the online market. This study summarises the influencing consumer actions in the food market. The factors include sensory qualities, nutritional value, and price persistent in some social classes. Based on the findings by various scholars on the purchasing decision determinants in the catering service sector, the most important factors are the quality of food, variety of food, the environment in and outside the local market, and the price of food (Nowicki et al., 2012). There are two types of advertisements namely rational appeal and emotional appeal advertisement. Rational appeal advertisements may not always suit certain goods, especially for products with the same function. A slight difference is observed when compared to competitive items or close substitutes in the sense of functionality, sensory, or technological characteristics. The emotional appeal advertisement method allows the marketers to build emotional connections into consumers' minds regarding the product being marketed using a unique emotional proposition. This method aims to tackle the consumer's psychological or social needs, which means they are attempting to trigger either positive or negative feelings that might contribute to a purchase.

Nowickiet al. (2012) focused on categorizing factors that determine specific behaviors of food purchasers, which included age, sex, education, and psychological factors. The psychological factors included personality, experience, mood, hunger, thirst, health status, and dietary habits. There are also environmental factors, such as price and income, social status, and cultural influences, including traditions or beliefs. This study was designed to assess the influence of Endorsement Appeals on the food buyers' purchase intention. Previous studies demonstrated that entrepreneurs use celebrity endorsement to improve customer buying incentives. Apart from the fact that celebrity endorsement encourages customers to buy goods, the appeal of celebrities' comments could also influence consumer product image (Muhmad Pirus & Zulqahar, 2018). The goals are set so that marketers, promotional organisations, and businesses

could benefit from this research outcome. It is expected that this study will identify the most significant factors from the surveys conducted using intensive questionnaires.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional Advertising Appeals versus Rational Advertising Appeals

Three stages are involved in the individual reaction to advertising, which helps classify the effectiveness of strategies in measuring advertisement (Martin-Santana and Beerli-Palacio, 2013). A model corresponding to the three stages of individual reaction to advertising has been developed. It is directly connected to the three functions of advertising: informing, creating attitudes or feelings toward the advertised object, and initiating a behavior or response in individuals. The model has identified three stages: 1) the cognitive stage, which means the individual's attention, knowledge, and understanding. 2) the affective stage, which depicts an individual's attitude, and finally, 3) the conative stage, which involves an individual's behavior.
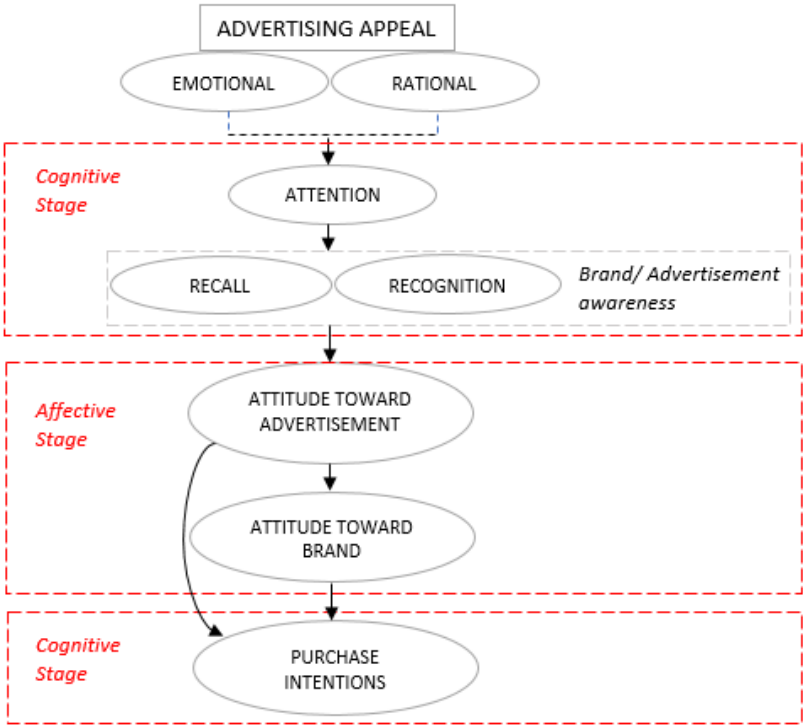

Figure 1. The Influence of Advertising Appeal on the Advertising Effectiveness Model
(Source: Martin-Santana and Beerli-Palacio, 2013)

Previous studies have been conducted in investigating attributes related to the best advertising appeal. However, the issues on the types of advertising appeal that can improve the market interest and provide the best promotion for specific goods remain unresolved. Prior research has proven that emotional or rational advertising appeals could be employed in determining the effectiveness of advertising appeal on a customer's cognitive stage, either regarding a printed or online displayed advertisement for convenience goods. Moreover, the implicit and explicit attitude towards emotionally appealing adverts in the category of comfort goods is more optimistic than the logical advertising appeals. Notwithstanding, a more favorable outlook does not contribute to higher customer purchasing intentions. Further analyses revealed that the

printed or outdoor displayed advertisement efficacy of convenience goods regarding the conative stage of customer reaction to advertising has a higher possibility to be achieved when a reasonable advertising appeal is implemented (Grigaliunaite & Pileliene, 2016).

Emotional appeals are forms of advertising in which the customer or buyer associates a product or service with an emotional connection (Rahman & Pial, 2019). According to Keshari and Jain (2014), emotional appeal is an effort to produce either negative or positive emotions that can motivate purchases. Panda et al. (2013) stated that marketers substitute rational advertising with emotional advertising when the former becomes difficult. Emotion has been suggested as a significant component of the consumer experience. The consumer's view includes positive and negative emotions such as happiness and sorrow. These emotional aspects of consumption affect the quality of life of individuals and humans in general. In consumer behavior, there has been an increasing interest in understanding the role of emotion in advertising appeals. A study revealed that the indicators of emotional appeals are celebrity endorsement, visuals, music, jingle, and slogans (Albers & Stafford, 1999). The present study focused on endorsement appeal, which refers to the entrepreneurs who used celebrity endorsement to improve customer buying incentives. Apart from encouraging customers to buy goods, celebrity endorsement and the appeal of their comments could influence consumer product image (Muhmad Pirus & Zulqahar, 2018).

2.2 Food Purchase Intention

In the food market, there is diversification in terms of consumers' expectations for specific foods. From healthy food such as vegetables, fruits, meat, and poultry to convenience food products and fast food, the consumers may involve in the purchase intention. Food Purchase Intention refers to consumers' attitudes concerning food, which depends on various attributes affecting their preferences in several ways, contributing to the acceptance and selection of certain items and rejecting others (Nowicki & Sikora, 2012). A customer's taste and desires should be considered when a company is creating an effective marketing plan. One of the critical aspects of consumer behavior in the food industry is to improve funds in line with consumers' needs. This is essential even without having the mechanism of consumption. The process of acquiring a particular product might occur either in or outside the market. A consumer may engage in self-supply or acquire a product in the form of donations from legal persons or natural persons. These elements, as mentioned earlier, are recognized in some social classes as part of influential factors in shopping. The summary of the research conducted by various scholars proved that the quality and variety of the food, the environment in and outside the local market, and the price of food are considered the most important factors influencing food buyers' purchase intention (Nowicki & Sikora, 2012). Several steps are taken to fulfill the objective of this study. Firstly, gauging the range of purchase intention due to the stimuli of advertisements' emotional appeals. Then, collecting, analyzing, and finally, presenting the emotional appeals that would influence the purchase intention of food buyers.

2.3 Impact of Endorsement Appeal on Purchase Intention

Advertisement appeals to customers' purchase intention are very lucrative and generate more sales to the companies. It communicates the details of products and entices customers to buy, creating a purchase intention for the customers. A study by Jovanovic et al. (2016) confirmed that marketing practices might affect the outcome of every creative strategy informing advertising appeals. In this study, endorsement appeals were considered potential factors influencing emotional appeals in advertisements of various food products that could attract food buyers' purchase intention. Whether positively, as an encouragement to buy or in a negative

direction, this appeal is a disincentive to the purchase intention. Advertising plays a vital role in creating ideas and suggestions for a potential buyer. Prior research has proven that attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, product image, and credibility of endorsement appeals, which are emotional appeals, could influence the buyer's purchase intention while attracting more customers for companies and increasing their sales.

An endorsement can be provided by a single person or a group of people, celebrities, influencers, athletes, experts, media reviewers, or product users to endorse a particular product. On the other hand, some advertising strategies employed the endorsement by recognized boards or associations such as Professional Associations, Safety Boards, Environmental Agencies, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (Finkle, 2019). Undeniably, celebrities can capture their followers' or fans' attention for new products or products that people would otherwise ignore. It is crucial to observe if the attention promotes the products and increases their sales. Elberse and Verleun (2012) found that paid endorsers reflect a positive impact on firms. Hence, it was concluded that endorsements are linked to the increase in sales with specific endorsement appeals attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and credibility.

Expertise is described as an individual's level of knowledge in terms of experience, knowledge, and problem-solving skills that a person has in a specific area. Becoming an expert requires practice, experience, and long-term training (Wiedmann et al., 2021). An expert can perform at a higher level in a specific domain. Additionally, Trustworthiness addresses the question of whether an individual could be considered believable (Goldsmith et al., 2000). It also refers to consumers believing the endorser is honest and has integrity. The influence of endorsement appeal through attractiveness aligns with consumers' belief that they have a similar attractiveness to the endorser. In other words, physically attractive celebrities influence consumers' behavior and attitudes favorably compared to less-attractive celebrities (Gong, 2017). Carroll (2008) explains that credibility could be defined as the extent to which a source is perceived as possessing significant knowledge or enough experience to offer an unbiased judgment. Therefore, credibility outlines whether an individual recognizes a true, unbiased, and honest claim.
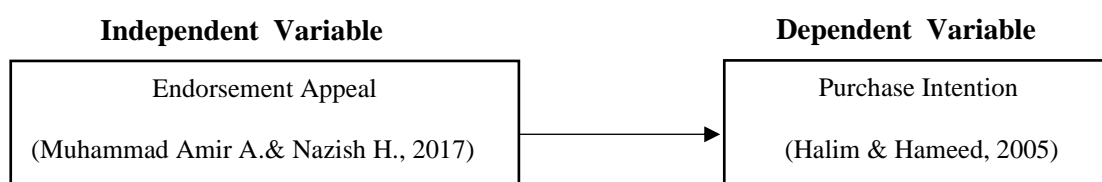
Independent Variable		Dependent Variable
Endorsement Appeal (Muhammad Amir A.& Nazish H., 2017)	→	Purchase Intention (Halim & Hameed, 2005)

Figure 2. Research Model

3. METHOD

The study was based on a quantitative approach, which means that it was primarily data-driven. The data were collected by distributing Likert-scale survey questionnaires to the target respondents. The questionnaire was structured based on the research topic and adapted from measurement items used in previous studies. The research location covered several wet market areas in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia namely Dungun, Paka, and Kuala Terengganu. The

questionnaire was distributed to the respondents face-to-face by following a strict operating procedure (e.g., wearing a face mask, hand sanitizer was used regularly, and a 1-meter social distance). For respondents who prefer to answer online, an online survey created using a Google form was provided. It is cost-effective as they eliminate the need for a paper to list all the questions. It eases the distribution of questionnaires to society and respondents. The accuracy of research findings is ensured as many respondents were approached using a convenience sampling method. Based on the estimation of Malaysia's population size of people aged between 15 and 65 years old (22.8 million), 95% confidence level, and a margin error of 5%, the number of respondents for this study was calculated as 385 respondents (Kajidata.com, 2018). The data were analyzed upon retrieving the completed questionnaires from the respondents. Reliability and validity were proven by using Cronbach's Alpha in the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 23. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship's degree, strength, and direction between endorsement appeal and purchase intention.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A total of 385 respondents participated in this survey. A higher proportion of the respondents were females (55.8%) than males (44.2%). Respondents aged between 14 and 24 years old accounted for 62.1% of the studied population, while only 2.3% were 45 to 54 years old. A higher proportion (52.5%) possessed bachelor's degrees, 36.9% attained a diploma level, 6.2% had SPM/STPM, whereas 4.4% had a Master's degree. For marital status, most of the respondents were married (85.7%), 13.8% were single, and 0.3% were married without kids.

Table 1 shows the reliability and validity of the instrument used for this study. The Cronbach's Alpha value was above 0.6, considered moderate but acceptable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	No. of Items
0.671	0.688	15

The analysis revealed that the independent variable (emotional appeal) influences the dependent variable (purchase intention of food buyers). Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis for the dependent variables in this research. The dependent variables: intention to purchase the products and preference for endorsement appeal, recorded a mean ($\pm$ standard deviation) of 3.0617 ($\pm$ 0.71889) and 3.3779 ($\pm$0.72412).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rate of intention to purchase the products being advertised	385	3.0617	0.71889
Rate of preference of endorsement appeal	385	3.3779	0.72412

Table 3. Correlations of the Variables

		Endorsement Appeal	Purchase Intention
Endorsement Appeal	Pearson Correlation	1**	0.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.000
	N	385	385
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	0.510**	1**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	385	385

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

Table 3 presents the correlation between endorsement appeal and purchase intention. There was a significant positive correlation between endorsement appeal and purchase intention. This result is consistent with a previous study in which emotional appeal influenced the purchasing intention among buyers (Rahman & Pial, 2019). The present study revealed that the elements of endorsement appeals could influence food buyers' purchasing intent. Furthermore, people have different attractions from endorsement appeals that could affect their purchasing intention.

5. DISCUSSION

The study findings reinforce an underlying conviction that endorsement appeal can have a significant influence on food buyers' purchase intention. An enjoyable advertisement should have content that can foster emotionally charged desire and action to purchase food products. The findings of this study could help food marketers to design better advertisements that appeal to the current generation. Furthermore, with the help of experts and market strategies in advertising, companies can know the tricks and tips to attract more customers to buy their products. The greater the demand for food products created through advertising methods is a good reason why more advertisements should be effectively designed to entice food buyers.

6. CONCLUSION

Developing an effective advertisement is a goal for every marketer. This ensures they remain competitive in the market and that people are persuaded to purchase their products. Designed wisely, advertising can be a powerful instrument to attract potential and existing customers. A stronger emphasis is made on advertising and other marketing strategies since they have effectively achieved the desired financial targets. Consumers are attracted to specific advertisements depending on their preferences. The findings of this study demonstrate that marketers prefer the emotional advertising appeal instead of the rational advertising appeal as it influences consumers' purchase intention in Malaysia. The study has several limitations that can be improved by future researchers. As the current study only focused on food buyers at wet markets at Terengganu, future researchers may include a broader sample and have other types of products. This would expand our understanding of the effects of emotional-based advertising on different types of household products such as home electrical appliances and furniture. Considering the popularity of online advertisements among food buyers, future researchers could consider the role of social media in creating emotional-based advertising.

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Evaluating the Performance of Waqf Land Development: A Case Study of *Waqf Seetee Aisah,* Pulau Pinang

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ABSTRACT

Waqf commonly works to preserve a thing or an asset and maximize the benefits or revenues for the beneficiaries. In Malaysia, waqf matters are managed by institutions such as the State Islamic Religious Council, which acts as a trustee. This council will plan and manage the waqf land according to the specific deed, either for general or specific waqf deed, as prescribed by the person who waqf the asset. However, waqf lands are usually not fully utilized. The community may not notice or realize that development is taking place, thus affecting the performance of waqf land development This research aims to identify the current waqf land development in Pulau Pinang, determine the challenges faced by the State Islamic Religious Council of Pulau Pinang in developing Wakaf Seetee Aisah, and measure the performance of waqf land development at Wakaf Seetee Aisah in Pulau Pinang. To achieve the research objectives, a qualitative approach through a semi-structured interview was conducted with four professionals practicing waqf land development in Pulau Pinang. The data gathered was analyzed through a content analysis method that interprets the respondents' responses. The research shows that the performance of waqf land development in Wakaf Seetee Aisah is doing well. All the developed units are sold, and the rental income increases annually. However, the results found that administration and marketing efficiency can still be enhanced. Lastly, it is hoped that this study can provide insights for the State Islamic Religious Council to improve their practice in managing the waqf land development more efficiently.

1. INTRODUCTION

Waqf, (awqaf is its plural form) means either as a hold, prohibit or confine a thing or an asset (Mohamad et al., 2012). It protects a thing from becoming a third person's belonging. In real estate, waqf could be a piece of land that is given for development to benefit the public and economy of a country. Hence, waqf includes preserving the land or an asset and maximizing the revenues for its beneficiary (Puad et al., 2014). Waqf is also considered a charity done by a person or organization. In non-Muslim countries, charitable activity or trust is the most popular deed in the act of giving. In the United Kingdom, the revenues gained from charity activity reached £1985 million in 2013 (Ali et al., 2015). In this urbanized era, the State Islamic Religious Councils (SIRCs) in Malaysia assist other waqf entities such as *Jabatan Wakaf, Zakat dan Haji* (JAWHAR), *Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia* (YWM) and its subsidiary *Perbadanan Wakaf*. Each entity is empowered to administer the waqf assets to realize the primary purpose of having a waqf activity.

The undeveloped land was the usual problem when discussing waqf land. The undeveloped or unutilized land issue can be observed in most areas of waqf land (Thaker & Pitchay, 2018). In addition, these lands are also undeveloped due to their waqf status, unlike traditional or common land. According to research, the SIRC management for every state can also impact the waqf land development because they play a significant role in ensuring the waqf land under their administration can perform (Mokhtar & Ibrahim, 2011). SIRC will be the trustee and manager in handling the waqf land for development or other purposes. For instance, in Pulau Pinang, the SIRC of Pulau Pinang has been established to undertake any waqf land and manage the land for investment, research or development and has authority over the assets.

A waqf land in Pulau Pinang that has been developed is *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. This development, a joint venture between SIRC of Pulau Pinang and UDA Holdings as a developer, has 76 units of double-story terrace houses and 21 commercial units and is located at Seberang Jaya. This research attempts to highlight the performance of the waqf land development in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* in Pulau Pinang in relation to the issues that arise in waqf land development. Therefore, the objectives of the research are to identify the current waqf land development in Pulau Pinang, to determine the challenges faced by the SIRC of Pulau Pinang in developing *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*, and to measure the performance of the waqf land development at *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* in Pulau Pinang.

The research is significant to Pulau Pinang itself as they are responsible for identifying those who administer, manage and develop the waqf land. This study indirectly shows how well the waqf land development in Pulau Pinang had performed. SIRC of Pulau Pinang can use the findings as guidance for their subsequent development project. It is expected to benefit the Muslim community and make them more concerned about waqf land development. It is a good move or tool in Islam to enrich Muslim's knowledge of the Islamic religion, specifically on waqf matters. This study will create more awareness for the community and indirectly attract them to be more involved in waqf matters.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Real Estate Development

Development can be defined as a paradox, a term showing a link between three principles (Oberle et al., 1974). The principles are economics, sociology, and ethics. In the real estate context in Malaysia, real estate development depends on Malaysian Development Planning. It

is an established policy used as guidance for construction and development planning framework. This constitution has been practiced in the construction sector ever since the late 1950s. Therefore, all practices and institutions developed under the policy are evolving from time to time since its establishment (Lee & Ging, 2017). Real estate development is also an essential factor that shapes the built environment (Heurkens et al., 2018). According to them, real estate development shapes people's lives and working environments. In addition, developing real estate enables human activities around the area to evolve.

2.2 Waqf

Waqf is an instrumental tool that provides social and economic safety through its role and responsibilities (Sapuan et al., 2017). It has also been used to meet the purpose of charity that has been ordered or specified by the founder who donated or waqf their belongings (Abdullah et al., 2017). There are two types of waqf: specific waqf and general waqf. Dahlia and Haslinda (2013) explained that specific waqf, also known as "*waqf khas*", is a situation where the donor will first declare the purposes of why they waqf their assets. General waqf, or "*waqf am*", is an open-ended waqf whereby the "*mutawalli*" may use the assets for any purpose that suits the function of the assets. The purpose will be general if it benefits society and is not against the Syariah principles.

Abdullah et al. (2017) clarified that waqf has two different asset elements: immovable and movable assets. Immovable waqf refers to any property or building consisting of land or houses, and movable waqf is usually something that can be moved from one place to another. It may be in the form of stationeries, things or books that can be waqf by people. According to Kahf (2003), the main characteristic of waqf is perpetuity. A characteristic of waqf is irrevocability, which means of lack of power by the waqi to revoke any of his donations. Waqf is considered binding as soon as the declaration of the donation is made and the property is transferred from the owner to the "ownership" of Allah (Ismail et al., 2015).

Waqf can be categorized into a few classes: waqf *khayri*, family waqf, cash waqf, and waqf *istibdal* (Yaacob, 2013). Waqf *Khayri* is similar to general waqf. The term "khayri" refers to general where it is used for public purposes. Family waqf brings the meaning of a private waqf. The beneficiaries of this type of waqf are usually through a hierarchy or already specified by the founder. In cash waqf, a donor called "*Al-Waqif*" has endowed a sum of cash instead of donating a real estate asset (Md. Shahedur Rahaman, 2011). Waqf *istibdal* happens when land must be converted between existing waqf assets with other assets (Yaacob, 2013). Waqf *istibdal* is very significant in ensuring the development of the Islamic economy by developing a non-strategic land of low value and low awareness into an asset (Bahari, 2019).

2.3 Management and Trustee of Waqf Assets

Categorized land management is divided into land administration and land management (Burns et al., 2006). These terms functioned as an instrument and worked together to help the person responsible for managing the land until it becomes what it is supposed to be (Burns et al., 2006). During the earlier stage, whoever has an asset and wants to waqf their respective assets will need to meet the village head or "*penghulu*", who will act as trustees of the asset (Yaacob, 2013). The waqif or founder will also choose a trustee or "*mutawalli*" to oversee and manage the trust given. *Waqif* will choose their trustee and appoint anyone who can succeed as trustee when there is a death or incapacity of waqif after the declaration was made (Khatib, 2016). The trustee must be honest, competent, and able to do the job efficiently as they act to preserve the

waqf asset and need to manage and develop the waqf asset to sustain the recipients' benefit at all costs (Abdullah et al., 2017).

In Malaysia, the SIRC is established and appointed as the trustee of waqf assets (Hassan & Rashid, 2015). SIRCs establishment aims to help and assist the founder and beneficiary on matters related to waqf. Besides, SIRCs also functioned to advise about the conditions and rules related to Islamic matters and customs of Malay and are involved in policymaking. In Malaysia, the states of Selangor, Malacca, and Negeri Sembilan have an establishment of law statutes known as the enactment of waqf, whereas for other states, including the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Labuan, provisions are available in their respective Islamic laws (Mahamood, 2014).

The Federal Government of Malaysia formed a department called *Jabatan Wakaf, Zakat dan Haji* (JAWHAR) in 2004. Placed under the Prime Minister's Department, this department was established to harness the waqf asset potential, *zakat* and *baitulmal* (Ahmad, Muhammad, & Kamaruzaman, 2012). JAWHAR is not an authority, but it is actively working as a complementary agency to ensure the development of waqf, *zakat*, and *baitulmal* are well facilitated and undertake the waqf development projects that the government has funded. JAWHAR established a new department known as *Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia* (YWM) to assist them and harness the waqf resources and complement the SIRCs' effort to achieve significant waqf land development.

2.4 Issues in Waqf Land Development

The estimated total land size recorded by SIRCs is about 8,861.13 hectares in Malaysia, but according to Sohaimi (2018), approximately 99.28 per cent of the estimated waqf land remains undeveloped. State Administration of Islamic Law Enactment has given the authority to SIRCs to act on behalf of the waqf assets. However, in some states, many waqf lands are still registered under individual titles, committees or *qariah*. Thus, this adds up to some issues about waqf land development as SIRCs cannot trace the waqf land's identity, leading to undeveloped land because the development applications do not fulfil the local authority's requirement (Ismail et al., 2015). Once a waqf asset is given, it will never be transferred, donated as a gift or inherited unless for some exceptions. As the characteristic of waqf is the permanence of rules and conditions implied by the founder this situation impacts the waqf land development as the trustee needs to comply with the regulations before deciding to develop it (Omar et al., 2014).

On the other hand, this condition may limit and reduce the development of waqf assets in the market. Kader and Dahlan (2006) mentioned that trusts in waqf matters are omitted in the National Land Code. Hence, with the absence of waqf matters and provisions in the act, any development or endorsement on the waqf matters cannot be made as no evidence supports the action (Sanek et al., 2017). There are many encroachments and illegal occupation issues on waqf lands in Malaysia. SIRCs faced many problems getting the illegal occupants to vacate the waqf land. Hence, this has become an issue as waqf land development cannot be successful (Ismail et al., 2015).

2.5 Performance

In waqf land development, the waqf needs to fulfill the requirements, including accountability. Ismail et al. (2015) explained that accountability refers to a duty to provide an account or establish an action that can be held responsible. However, the level of accountability also varies based on the parties interested in it and the type of organization (Ebrahim, 2010). However,

measuring performance is challenging to conceptualize, especially for non-profit organizations. Waqf institution is also included; hence many scholars give different opinions on measuring performance. This is due to the complexity of measurement as waqf organizations are more focused on achieving the beneficiary's goals, and the level of accomplishment is too difficult to be measured (Shafii et al., 2014).

The performance or success of a non-profit organization (NPO), similar to a waqf institution, should be measured based on the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization in handling the necessity and expectations of stakeholders itself (Kaplan, 2001). Due to the purpose of waqf institutions bringing similar meaning to non-profit organization goals, Ramli and Muhamed (2013) suggested adopting NPO's performance measurement onto waqf institutions. Therefore, based on the previous research on performance and the waqf variables explained in the literature review, the proposed performance measurement is illustrated in Figure 1.
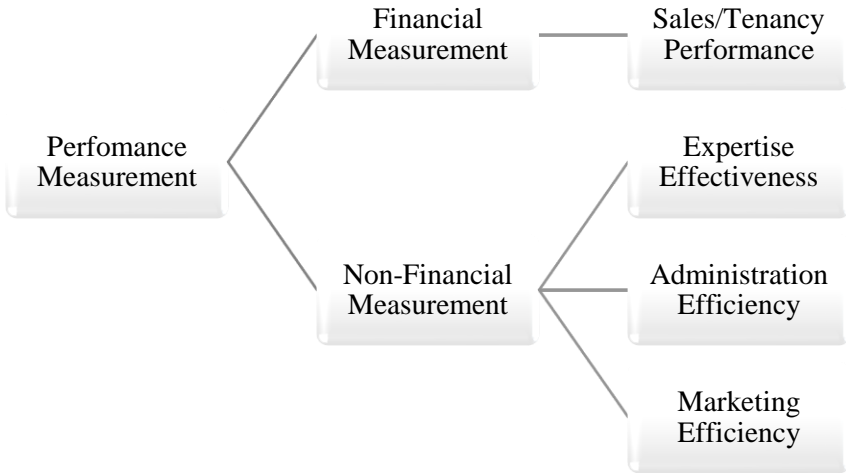
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Figure 1. Performance Measurement in Waqf Institutions

3. METHOD

In this study, the researcher aims to use interview sessions to obtain the data. The interview is defined as a qualitative approach that requires only a small number of individuals as respondents and aims to see their perspectives and opinion on a particular matter (Boyce, 2006). In this study, the secondary data will not have any limitations. They will be gathered as much as possible because they are essential to measuring the performance of waqf land development in Pulau Pinang. By having interview sessions as the data collection technique, the researcher will need to conduct an interview session with the practitioner from the SIRC of Pulau Pinang. Appointments with the respondents are made through face-to-face sessions, emails, or telephone interviews.

The researcher initially planned to collect data from five respondents. However, only four respondents were available for the semi-structured interview sessions. Based on the purpose of the study, the respondents were purposively chosen based on their knowledge and expertise in the waqf development field in Pulau Pinang. All of them are in charge of waqf land development in Pulau Pinang as they are working under the SIRC of Pulau Pinang. In this study, the researcher collected the data from the interview sessions by recording the semi-structured

interviews during the interview session. Besides audio recording, the researcher also listed respondents' points, opinions, or perspectives. After that, the recorded interviews are converted and transcribed by the researcher using the content analysis method. Qualitative content analysis is an analysis that involves quoting interpretation from analyzed text into a conclusion, unlike quantitative analysis, which commonly uses frequency and statistics.

3.1 Case Study

The SIRC of Pulau Pinang is established under *Seksyen 4, Undang-Undang Pentadbiran Ulama 1959*, mainly to advise the royal highness on Islamic matters. The function of SIRC in Pulau Pinang is to ensure that society in Pulau Pinang lives in peace and is pious, following teachings of the Islamic religion in their daily lives. In the context of development, SIRC of Pulau Pinang also develops, enhances, and promotes economic growth and social well-being while being Syariah compliant. In an SIRC, there are many sub-units. One unit that deals with waqf development matters is the Property Development Unit. This unit's function is to ensure that all the waqf land is being developed under general or specific waqf. *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* is chosen as a case study in this research due to its successful development and its continuation from phase 1 to phase 2, showing that the development done previously had a positive and significant impact on waqf land development in Malaysia. Its performance could be observed and measured based on the reports and observations compared to other waqf lands in Malaysia. Therefore, in this research, the study aims to interview the experts or professionals from that unit as they are deemed knowledgeable in giving out pertinent information and opinions related to the study undertaken.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A qualitative approach was taken to get the best results, produce a reasonable interpretation, and draw the correct conclusions from the study. During the interview session, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the respondents involved in the waqf land development, in this case, *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. The first respondent was an officer who is the Administration Assistant Officer (Asset Management) from Waqf Property and Land Development Unit of the SIRC of Pulau Pinang. The interview took about an hour. The second session was held with the second respondent, an Administration Assistant Officer from the same unit in SIRC of Pulau Pinang. The third and fourth respondents are also from the same unit in SIRC Pulau Pinang. However, these respondents held different positions. The third respondent is an Executive Officer (Authority), while the last respondent is a Site Engineer.

The findings obtained based on the research objectives were illustrated in cross-cases content analysis. The results were divided according to the objectives, and responses from the participants were coded as *R1, R2, R3 and R4*. Meanwhile, each objective is coded as *Category 1, Category 2, and Category 3* in the findings. The analysis will be derived from the three main objectives of this research study and the responses from the first to the last respondent. Therefore, the data analysis is based on the objectives of the study. The objectives are:

    i)   To identify the current waqf land development in Pulau Pinang. *(Category 1)*
    ii)   To determine the challenges faced by the State Islamic Religious Council (SIRC) of Pulau Pinang in developing *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. *(Category 2)*
    iii)   To measure the performance of waqf land development at *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* in Pulau Pinang. *(Category 3)*

4.1 Analysis of Objective 1 (Category 1)

The research found out that the current waqf development, named *Wakaf Seetee Aisah 2*, is a continuation of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* 1. Below is the information gained from participant R2 during the interview session.

Table 1. Data Obtained from Participant R2 on Current Waqf Development Held

Name of Development	:	*Wakaf Seetee Aisah Fasa* 2
Lot	:	3117,252,200
Location	:	Mukim 4, Seberang Jaya, Seberang Perai Tengah, Pulau Pinang
Component	:	422 units of medium-cost apartments, 150 units of low-cost apartments, 30 units of shop offices, 15 units of stall centres, office blocks (4 storeys), surau and halls
Cost	:	RM 120 million
Financing	:	Joint venture with UDA Sdn Bhd

4.2 Analysis of Objective 2 (Category 2)

The analysis reveals the identification of a few factors that had become obstacles to SIRC of Pulau Pinang in ensuring the growth or performance of waqf development in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* from when it was first announced.

4.2.1 Society's Mindset

Participant R1 has stated that the biggest challenge in managing the *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* development is tolerating society's mindset. He added that, in his opinion, the society in Pulau Pinang is still looking at waqf assets or development for charitable purposes. He said that most of the time, even the tenants of the shophouses in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* still apply to reduce the rental price as they thought the development would help Muslim people. As for information, the tenancy of the shophouses was selected from a tender session. Hence, this gives the meaning that both parties have agreed upon the rental prices in the first place. According to participant R2, society is often misled about waqf. Hence, it is a challenge to development management as tenants disobey all the instructions, such as rental payments and many more. All respondents have similar thoughts regarding society's sentiment and mindset challenges. Participant R3 said that "society's behavior matters the most", and participant R4 quotes that "tenant's behavior" is a challenge.

4.2.2 Financing Problem

The financing problem for end-users is also considered one of the challenges that SIRC of Pulau Pinang faced during the sales phase. The participants cited that there are some difficulties securing loans for end-users due to the characteristics of waqf and leasing terms. Not many financial institutions are ready to give loans for development under waqf land. During the first phase of sales activities, Al Rahji Bank was one of the pioneers to agree and provide loans to end-users for this development. Government financial institutions at that time did not allow governments servants to apply for loans related to waqf development land. According to

participant R2, due to waqf being a leasing term in its tenure, many financial institutions are not brave enough to give financing to the end-users. This is because, after all, the landowner will still be under SIRC's name. This will be a problem for bank institutions to undergo activities such as auctions and many more.

4.2.3 Difficulties in Rental Collection

There is difficulty collecting the rental of shophouses in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. The tenants do not pay the rental regularly, making it a challenge for SIRC to ensure the development of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* is sustained. According to participant R2, when tenants pay the rental late, it makes it difficult for SIRC to manage the asset as the maintenance and service fees are all included in the rental paid. On top of that, participant R3 added that society's behavior leads to this challenge as they do not understand how waqf development operates.

4.3 Analysis of Objective 3 (Category 3)

SIRC of Pulau Pinang measures the performance of the waqf land development in a slightly different way from the standard performance measure, which is the return on assets and many more. This situation happened because the main objective of an SIRC's establishment is to help the Muslim society improve their quality of life and standard of living while continuing the deed given by the donator of waqf land. Hence, the waqf land development performance measure is explained differently due to the absence of documentation.

Participant R1 stated that *Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Pulau Pinang* (MAINPP), a part of the SIRC of Pulau Pinang, does not document the profits gained from waqf land development housing sales in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. They are only given about 76 units of houses out of the total portion of the units developed by UDA Holding Sdn Bhd. He added that they work to help society to own houses, so once they find the potential buyer, their responsibility ends. This explanation highlights the absence of housing sales documentation or report as they said the financial gain is not their main highlight in developing them. Participant R3 said that usually, the performance of the development is measured through the success in the selling and tenancy phase and that the performance of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*, in their opinion, is doing well as all 76 housing units were sold at the same time.

Apart from housing sales, the tenancy performance of shophouses in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* was also highlighted during the interview session. The performance of rental collection is different from housing sales this time around, and there is documentation to be referred to. The documentation of tenancy collection performance obtained during the interview session is shown in Table 2. Based on the document or report received, it is evident that the tenancy performance of shophouses in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* grows and increases every year. However, the amount that the SIRC should collect and the amount that has been collected are different in its figure. According to participant R1, the reason it is different is related to challenges explained in objective 2, which is difficulties in collecting rental income from tenants. Even though the rental income increases yearly, the amount does not tally. Hence, this affects the performance of waqf development in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*.

Table 2. Rental Collection Performance on Waqf Land Development in *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*

Year	Early Balance (RM)	Rental Amount to be Collected (RM)	Rental Adjustments (RM)	Rental Amount Collected (RM)	Final Balance (RM)
2013	0.00	252,950.00	0.00	225,750.00	27,200.00
2014	27,200.00	612,500.00	27,800.00	544,600.00	122,900.00
2015	122,900.00	675,503.00	2,500.00	593,534.00	207,369.00
2016	207,369.00	698,280.00	3,360.00	614,986.00	294,023.00
2017	294,023.00	684,018.00	8,610.00	616,328.00	370,323.00
2018	370,323.00	635,705.00	8,980.00	597,253.00	399,795.00
2019	399,795.00	650,800.00	3,000.00	623,887.00	429,708.00
2020	429,708.00	521,200.00	5,050.00	399,980.00	555,978.00
Total	**0.00**	**4,730,956.00**	**41,340.00**	**4,216,318.00**	**555,978.00**

(Source: Compiled by the authors from interview with the Penang State Islamic Religious Council)

For non-financial performance measures, some variables were put to respondents as these also contribute to the performance of waqf development. The inputs of non-financial performance measures related to expertise, marketing strategy, and effective administration may become factors that contribute to a non-profit organization's performance. UDA Holding Sdn Bhd functions as expertise in this waqf land development and has performed its best in developing *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. UDA Holdings Sdn Bhd received the 1st Global Waqf Conference Recognition Awards in 2019 after their successful *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* development. In terms of administration by SIRCs, the administration of SIRC in Pulau Pinang may still be measured as moderate performance as the staff involved in developing waqf land is limited, hence putting pressure on them to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the development. However, participants R3 and R4 respectively mentioned that it is lucky that SIRCs of Pulau Pinang is one of the technical teams in the One Stop Centre of Local Authority in Pulau Pinang. Hence, this gives them the advantage of ensuring that waqf land development performs well. Participant R1 mentioned that since they are a non-profit organization, their marketing performance is not great compared to others as they do not consider documenting any performance. Fortunately, UDA helps gain public awareness of this *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* development most of the time. The marketing strategy by SIRC cannot match what UDA Holdings Sdn Bhd did in promoting *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. They also agreed that their expertise helps in promoting the development.

5. CONCLUSION

This section discusses whether the objectives of the study have been achieved and provides some possible recommendations for better future research. Identification of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah Fasa* 2 helps to achieve objective one, to identify current waqf development in Pulau Pinang. This development project is a continuation of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* 1 with the same joint venture with UDA Holdings Sdn Bhd. Next, the second objective is to identify the challenges faced by SIRC of Pulau Pinang as a trustee and their role in developing and managing the development of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. According to the interview session, the challenges stated by all the respondents are society's mindset, financing problems, and difficulties in collecting rental

income. All the respondents expressed that these challenges started during the construction phase and lasted until the current management phase. On the performance side, it can be concluded that the sales performance of that development has been achieved based on the total units of houses that have been sold off. Despite the absence of sales performance, the tenancy income documentation was presented to the researchers, which can be used to measure the performance of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. The rental income has been increasing yearly from 2013 to 2020. However, there is a mismatch of values between the amount of rent collected and the amount that should be collected throughout the years. This is related to the challenge stated by respondents, which is the difficulty in collecting rental income. Hence, due to this challenge, it can be concluded that it affects the rental performance of *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. Therefore, the SIRC of Pulau Pinang should take strict action against those tenants who do not cooperate in paying the rental of the waqf assets. This is because it will affect the income gained, leading to many problems in waqf land development. Hence, strict action such as a penalty should be taken towards the defaulting tenants to prevent a mismatch between tenancy rental income performance.

Besides that, in non-financial measurement, all respondents agreed that having UDA Holdings Sdn Bhd as a joint venture developer in developing *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* has ensured excellent progress of the development from the construction until the marketing phases. This gives insight that expertise is needed in the development. In administration efficiency measures, all respondents agree that they are still not familiar with project development documentation, and a lack of staff may also affect the performance of project development. This gives insight that administration efficiency in the SIRC in managing the project development is still at a moderate level. Lastly, all respondents agreed that marketing efficiency is well performed due to the expertise of UDA Holding Sdn Bhd in promoting *Wakaf Seetee Aisah* to the public, and they agreed that UDA Holding Sdn Bhd helps in increasing awareness of waqf land development, especially *Wakaf Seetee Aisah*. Therefore, these findings are expected to give insights and benefits for future research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

NAA and NNA wrote the introduction, and literature sections. They also carried out the data collection process. MAS, NNZ, and MI refined the data and performed the data analysis using Nvivo and abstracted the content. NAA and MAS wrote the data methodology section. MI and WZ wrote the discussion and implication sections. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Qualitative Interview Questions

1. What is the current waqf development that has been developed by MAINPP for the state of Pulau Pinang?

2. In your opinion, are there any challenges you think of that make the development of waqf land to be delayed or unsuccessful? If any, can you explain further in detail those challenges?

3. Based on the challenges stated above, would you like to rank those challenges from most challenging to the least one? And do the challenges affect the performance of waqf land development?

4. How about the sales activities and rental income of waqf projects from year to year in Wakaf Seetee Aisah development? Do the performance increase? If permissible, are there any reports regarding the performance of the development activities?

5. During the literature review, there are few variables in waqf land development are listed that contribute to measuring the performance of waqf land development. The variables are such as financial ratios, expertise effectiveness, efficient administration, and marketing. Hence, in your opinion, does it help to measure the performance in Wakaf Seetee Aisah?

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