Factors Influencing Career Readiness Among Students in a Selected Public University in Klang Valley, Malaysia

Nurul Afiqah Mohd Razean[1], Ahmad Aizuddin Md Rami[1], Nur Anis Hadirah Ahmad Kamal[2]

[1]Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia
[2]Institute for Social Science (IPSAS), Universiti Putra Malaysia

Corresponding author: ahmadaizuddinmdrami@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors influencing career readiness among undergraduate students in selected public university in Klang Valley Malaysia, focusing on the role of career guidance and counselling, and parental guidance in shaping students' readiness for the workforce. Using a quantitative approach, the research involved surveying 144 undergraduate students from diverse faculties, employing validated instruments such as the Career Readiness Scale (CRS), Career Adapt- Abilities Scale (CAAS) and Parental Career-Related Behaviours Scale (PCB). The findings reveal that structured career guidance and counselling significantly along with parental guidance, significantly enhance students' career readiness. This readiness is supported through the development of its three critical components; building career related self-efficacy, fostering adaptability to workplace challenges and strengthening decision making capabilities. Students who engage with comprehensive career guidance programs and receive supportive parental guidance demonstrate higher levels of career readiness. However, the study also highlights challenges such as variability in parental involvement and the need for broader collaboration between universities, families, and policymakers. To ensure sustainable career readiness, the study recommends integrating long-term career guidance strategies, fostering parental engagement, and aligning academic training with labour market demands. These findings contribute to the discourse on career readiness, offering practical insights for educators, policymakers, and families in creating a supportive ecosystem for students transitioning into professional careers.

Keywords: Career readiness, Career guidance and counselling, Parental guidance, Workforce preparation

INTRODUCTION

The transition from the relative certainty of academic life to the unpredictable world of work is a defining period for most university students. Moving beyond lectures, examinations, and campus friendships, they face a landscape shaped by complex career pathways, diverse employer expectations, and rapid changes in the nature of work itself (Mohd Zaini et al., 2021). For students preparing to make this leap, it is rarely just a matter of applying the right skills at the right moment. It also requires self-awareness, adaptability, and a degree of resilience that can help them navigate what can sometimes feel like an overwhelming process of self-discovery. Within this context, career readiness an individual's preparedness to plan, explore, and make sound decisions about future work has become more than an academic concept, it is a practical skill set with significant personal and societal implications (Kim et al., 2021).

In Malaysia, especially in urban regions like the Klang Valley, this issue is gaining increasing attention (Mohd Zaini et al., 2021; Abdul Rahim et al., 2021). Universities receive students with diverse aspirations who must chart their own routes toward fulfilling careers. Many of these students possess academic competencies yet may lack a sense of direction or confidence when contemplating the job

market they will enter after graduation. The issue is not limited to a shortage of qualifications or technical expertise. Indeed, even graduates with strong grades may struggle to align their personal strengths and ambitions with the realities of their chosen professions (Rami et al. 2021). Research has indicated that without appropriate guidance and support, students often feel ill-equipped to make informed career decisions, sometimes resulting in anxiety, indecision, or unrealistic expectations about what their first steps after graduation might look like (Mohd Zaini et al., 2021).

At the heart of this concern lies the question of support. It is widely accepted that career guidance and counselling services offered at universities contribute meaningfully to career preparedness (Abdul Rahim et al., 2021 When well-implemented, these programmes offer students practical exposure, help them gain insights into the world of work, and encourage them to reflect on their skills and interests (Brown & Lent, 2021). However, the experience of career guidance is not uniform across all students. Some participate in workshops and career fairs enthusiastically and emerge more self-assured, while others do not access these services as readily due to lack of awareness, personal barriers, or differences in faculty-level provision. Even where such programmes exist, questions often remain about their scope, relevance to real-world demands, and capacity to keep pace with rapidly shifting labour market trends (Hirschi, 2012).

Equally significant is the influence of family, especially parental guidance. Parents often provide a sounding board for aspirations, offer emotional encouragement during moments of uncertainty, and serve as role models through their own career paths and networks (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In the Malaysian context, parental support can help students feel more grounded, especially where decisions about career choices carry cultural expectations. Yet this support is also variable. Not every student enjoys the same level of parental understanding of modern career options, and not all parents are equipped to offer constructive advice. Some may encourage traditional professions with which they are familiar, while others may not feel confident discussing career issues at all. This raises a significant challenge in ensuring equitable career readiness across the student population.

These article highlight the need to look closely at the interplay between institutional structures and family dynamics in shaping career preparedness. Universities cannot fully address this issue alone. They require cooperation and partnerships with parents and, more broadly, with communities and policymakers to establish an environment that supports students' aspirations more holistically (Abdul Rahim et al. 2021). Doing so is especially vital in light of ongoing changes in the economy, where graduates will need more than just knowledge in their fields they will need flexibility, initiative, and an ability to make thoughtful choices under uncertain conditions. This article explores these interconnected dimensions of career readiness. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which structured career guidance and parental support influence students' preparedness for entering the workforce, drawing on quantitative evidence gathered at a public university in the Klang Valley. The aim is to offer nuanced, research-based insights that can inform policy and practice in higher education and career services. By examining these factors together, the article seeks to highlight areas for intervention and encourage collaborative solutions that help students feel better equipped for the paths they choose. The objective of this article is to examine the role of career guidance and parental guidance in shaping undergraduate students' career readiness and to identify actionable strategies that universities, parents, and policymakers might implement to enhance students' successful transition into the world of work.

Career guidance and counselling are pivotal in shaping students' readiness for professional challenges. Structured programs, such as workshops, career fairs, and internships, offer practical insights and prepare students to navigate workplace expectation (Mohd Zaini et al., 2021). These services enhance their decision-making skills, self-efficacy, and adaptability qualities that are increasingly valued by employers in a rapidly evolving job market Furthermore, the role of parents in influencing career pathways cannot be understated. Through emotional support and guidance, parents help build the resilience and confidence needed for students to tackle the uncertainties of career transitions effectively (Kim et al., 2021). Despite the availability of career guidance resources and parental support, challenges persist in achieving optimal career readiness among students. Variations in access to these resources, disparities in parental involvement, and the misalignment between academic curricula and industry expectations create obstacles for students. Addressing these gaps requires a comprehensive approach that integrates institutional support, parental engagement, and policy-driven initiatives to create a robust ecosystem for career readiness This study seeks to explore these factors in

depth, providing actionable insights to enhance the support systems for students at public university and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career readiness is a critical concept that encompasses the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required for a smooth transition from academic life to professional environments. Hirschi (2012) defined career readiness as the ability to effectively engage in decision-making processes and adapt to dynamic workplace demands, and this construct includes both technical competencies and soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, which are increasingly emphasized in modern labor markets (Savickas, 2020). Career readiness is not a static attribute but evolves with exposure to structured guidance, life experiences, and parental involvement, making it a multifaceted and dynamic quality. The importance of career readiness lies in its direct correlation with employability and workplace success, and research by Brown and Lent (2021) indicates that individuals with high career readiness are more likely to secure employment and exhibit greater adaptability to workplace changes. In academic contexts, career readiness has become a benchmark for universities aiming to prepare students for the competitive labour market, and understanding the factors influencing career readiness, such as career guidance and counselling and parental guidance, is crucial for designing effective interventions.

Career guidance and counselling are widely acknowledged as essential components of career readiness (Fajriani et al., 2024) because these structured programs offer students practical tools and resources to navigate career pathways, thereby enhancing their confidence and decision-making capabilities. Savickas and Porfeli (2012) argue that career guidance programs, such as workshops, mock interviews, and internships, help students identify their strengths and align them with professional opportunities, and these programs contribute to career adaptability by exposing students to real-world challenges and fostering self-efficacy. Furthermore, research shows that participation in guidance programs fosters critical thinking and leadership skills (Rami et al., 2020) that are vital in modern workplaces. Dietrich and Kracke (2009) emphasized that mentorships, as part of career counselling initiatives, offer individualized attention to students, helping them set achievable goals and recognize opportunities for career growth. However, variability in access to these resources creates unequal opportunities among students, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, and the alignment between career guidance initiatives and labour market demands remains a critical area for improvement Abdul Rahim et al., 2021). Universities must continuously adapt their career counselling strategies to reflect emerging industry trends and employer expectations; for example, integrating experiential learning components such as internships or cooperative education programs can bridge the gap between academic training and workplace realities.

Additionally, career guidance programs contribute to career readiness by incorporating technological innovations, such as virtual career fairs, AI-driven career assessment tools, and online portfolio development workshops. These advancements provide students with broader access to resources, enabling them to explore diverse career options in global markets (Mohd Zaini et al., 2021). By leveraging technology, career counsellors can personalize career advice and empower students to take ownership of their professional journeys, ensuring that they remain competitive in a rapidly evolving job market.

Parental guidance is another critical factor influencing career readiness, contributing significantly to emotional resilience and career decision-making among students. Parents often serve as role models, offering encouragement and support that help students navigate the uncertainties of career planning. Kim et al. (2021) highlights the role of parents in fostering career self-efficacy, noting that parental involvement is particularly effective when it is supportive rather than controlling, and authoritative parenting styles, which combine high expectations with emotional warmth, have been shown to yield better outcomes compared to overbearing or indifferent approaches (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Siraj et al., 2022). Emotional support from parents not only boosts students' confidence but also helps them develop coping mechanisms for career-related challenges; for instance, students who receive constructive feedback and encouragement from their parents are more likely to make informed career

choices and demonstrate resilience in the face of setbacks. Moreover, parents play a crucial role in exposing students to career options by sharing their professional experiences and networks, further broadening their understanding of potential career paths.

The influence of parental guidance extends beyond emotional support and includes practical contributions, such as financial assistance for professional certifications or study materials, which are critical for career development. Parents who are engaged in their children's academic and extracurricular activities are better equipped to identify their strengths and align these with suitable career options. However, variability in parental involvement across different socioeconomic and cultural contexts creates disparities in career readiness among students, and some parents may lack the knowledge or resources to provide effective guidance, particularly in cases where they are unfamiliar with contemporary career pathways or labour market dynamics. To address these challenges, universities and policymakers can implement targeted initiatives, such as parental education programs, to equip families with the tools and knowledge needed to support their children's career development (Rehman et al., 2024).

The interplay between career guidance and parental support highlights the importance of a holistic approach to fostering career readiness (Fajriani et al., 2024). These two factors often work synergistically, with each reinforcing the other to create a supportive ecosystem for students. For instance, students who participate in structured career guidance programs may benefit from parental reinforcement of the skills and knowledge gained through these initiatives, and conversely, parents who are actively involved in their children's career planning may encourage greater participation in career counselling and related activities. Collaborative approaches, such as family workshops or joint counselling sessions, can enhance the effectiveness of career readiness initiatives by aligning institutional support with parental guidance (Rehman et al., 2024). Moreover, universities can strengthen this collaboration by creating platforms for continuous communication between career advisors and parents, ensuring consistent support for students.

Furthermore, cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of career readiness. In collectivist societies, for example, family expectations often influence career choices, making parental involvement even more crucial in guiding students toward career pathways that balance individual aspirations with familial goals. Research by Savickas (2020) underlines the value of integrating cultural contexts into career guidance frameworks, noting that culturally sensitive approaches can enhance the relevance and impact of career counselling programs. By tailoring career readiness initiatives to reflect the cultural and social realities of their student populations, institutions can create more inclusive and effective support systems (Rumeli et al., 2022).

In addition to structured guidance and parental support, peer networks and community involvement also contribute to career readiness by fostering a sense of belonging and shared learning among students. Peer mentorship programs, in particular, enable students to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and develop interpersonal skills that are critical for workplace success. Community engagement initiatives, such as volunteering or participating in local projects, provide students with opportunities to apply their skills in real-world settings while cultivating a sense of social responsibility. These complementary factors further underscore the multifaceted nature of career readiness and highlight the need for integrated approaches that address the diverse needs of students.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing career readiness among undergraduate students at selected public university in central zone Malaysia According to Kothari (2004) and Md Rami et al, (2022), a quantitative approach is suitable for gathering precise and measurable data, making it ideal for exploring relationships between variables such as career guidance, parental support, and career readiness. The data was collected through an online survey using a structured questionnaire, ensuring ease of access for respondents while maintaining consistency across responses The study population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in a selected public university in Klang Valley Malaysia. A total of 144 participants were selected using convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique chosen for its practicality and efficiency in accessing a

diverse group of students (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Mohd Ariffin, 2024). The sample size was determined using G*Power analysis, which recommended a minimum of 107 participants based on an effect size of 0.15, a significance level of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.95. According to Mohd Siraj (2023), G*Power analysis is an appropriate tool for calculating sample size, and it recommends a minimum number of participants.

The research instrument was divided into four sections: demographic information, career readiness, career guidance and counselling, and parental guidance. Validated scales such as the Career Readiness Scale (CRS) by Dodd, et al., (2021), Career Adapt- Abilities Scale (CAAS) by Savickas and Porfeli (2012), and the Parental Career-Related Behaviours Scale (PCB) by Dietrich and Kracke (2009) were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure respondents' levels of agreement with various statements, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26.0, which provided descriptive and inferential statistical insights. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic and variable data. Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between career readiness, career guidance, and parental involvement, while multiple linear regression was employed to identify the predictive strength of the independent variables on career readiness.

To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 30 participants prior to the main data collection. The Cronbach's alpha values for career readiness, career guidance, and parental guidance were 0.700, 0.851, and 0.781, respectively, indicating acceptable to high reliability (Hair et al., 2010). These results validated the suitability of the instrument for the study. Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data confidentiality was strictly maintained. The study's findings aim to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and families in enhancing career readiness among university students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates the influence of career guidance and counselling, as well as parental guidance, on career readiness among undergraduate students in selected public university in central zone Malaysia. The findings highlight the significant roles these factors play in equipping students with the necessary skills, confidence, and decision-making capabilities for workforce transitions.

Career Readiness

Career readiness represents a student's ability to effectively transition from academia to professional environments. The descriptive analysis revealed a mean career readiness score of 4.15 (SD = 0.60), indicating a relatively high level of preparedness among students. This readiness encompasses skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and adaptability. Previous studies, including those by Savickas (2020), have emphasized the importance of career readiness as a predictor of successful employment outcomes. Students with higher career readiness are better equipped to handle workplace challenges and adapt to dynamic environments.

Table 1. Career Readiness Summary

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Career Readiness	4.15	0.60

Career Guidance and Counselling and Career Readiness

Career guidance emerged as a pivotal element in fostering career readiness, with a significant correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Structured programs such as workshops, mock interviews, and internships provide students with the practical tools and confidence to navigate the job market

effectively. The regression analysis further underscored this factor's importance, with career guidance showing a Beta coefficient of 0.42 (p < 0.001).

Table 2. Correlation between Career Guidance and Counseling and Career Readiness

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Career Readiness (r)
Career Guidance and Counselling	4.25	0.68	0.68*

Research by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) emphasized that structured guidance not only enhances self-efficacy but also prepares students to adapt to workplace expectations. These findings align with the present study, confirming that students who actively participate in career counselling demonstrate better decision-making and confidence in their career choices.

Parental Guidance

Parental guidance plays a secondary but essential role in career readiness, contributing to emotional resilience and social adaptability. The Pearson correlation analysis showed a moderate positive relationship (r = 0.52, p < 0.05), while the regression analysis revealed a Beta coefficient of 0.30 (p < 0.01).

Table 3. Correlation between Parental Guidance and Career Readiness

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation with Career Readiness (r)
Parental Guidance	3.85	0.72	0.52*

Studies by Kim et al. (2021) highlight that emotional support from parents fosters resilience, enabling students to navigate career-related challenges effectively. However, the variability in parental involvement indicates the need for institutional support to bridge this gap for students who lack strong parental guidance.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This study provides practical implications for stakeholders, especially higher education institutions, career guidance practitioners, and parents. The findings underscore the need to enhance career guidance programs through structured initiatives like internships, career fairs, and one-on-one counseling, as these programs build students' decision-making skills and adaptability, aligning with the conclusions of Savickas and Porfeli (2012) and Brown and Lent (2021). Moreover, parental guidance plays a significant role in shaping career readiness. This supports findings by Kim et al. (2021), who emphasize parental involvement in fostering career self-efficacy, especially when provided in a supportive and informed manner. Therefore, universities and policymakers can collaborate to design parent-focused workshops and career guidance sessions that encourage parents to support their children's career choices more strategically (Rehman et al., 2024). Furthermore, to address unequal access to career guidance programs, universities must provide targeted interventions for students from underprivileged backgrounds, as suggested by Rami et al. (2021), so that all students receive equitable career support. These findings advocate for a collaborative support system that integrates institutional career services with parental guidance to bolster career readiness among undergraduates.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that career guidance and parental support play significant and complementary roles in enhancing career readiness among undergraduate students. Findings indicated

that structured career guidance initiatives, such as workshops and counselling sessions, contribute to greater self-efficacy and adaptability, equipping students with the practical skills and mindset necessary to navigate the competitive job market. Similarly, supportive parental guidance emerged as a key factor that bolsters students' emotional resilience and reinforces their decision-making capacity. Together, these elements help bridge the gap between students' academic training and the diverse, evolving expectations of contemporary workplaces. Moreover, the study also revealed important variations in the level of parental involvement and access to career guidance, suggesting that further interventions may be required to ensure all students receive the support they need. This underscores the need for collaborative strategies that unite the efforts of universities, career services, parents, and policymakers to create a more inclusive and sustained ecosystem for career development.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of this research hold several practical implications. For higher education institutions, career guidance programmes must be continually refined to align with labour market trends and integrate experiential components that enhance students' confidence and preparedness. University career centres can also explore partnerships with employers and alumni to offer mentoring and real-world insights into industry expectations. Beyond the campus, parents can be empowered to take a more proactive role by participating in educational workshops and career information sessions. These interventions can help parents understand modern career paths, encourage supportive behaviours, and reduce disparities arising from socio-economic or cultural differences. Moreover, the study suggests that national policy frameworks and local education stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring access to career guidance is not restricted by background or institutional capacity. Future research could examine these dynamics across a broader range of institutions or extend the investigation longitudinally to explore how career readiness develops over the course of students' academic journeys. Ultimately, by fostering strategic collaboration across multiple sectors, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of career guidance and parental support, equipping graduates with the resilience and competencies required to succeed in today's rapidly changing work environments.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
No any potential conflicts of interest related to the study, whether financial, personal, or professional, that may affect the objectivity and integrity of the research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS
AAMR refine research framework and methodology section. NAMR and NAHAK contributed on data collection, analysis and writing a result.

REFERENCE

Abdul Rahim, N. S., Wan Jaafar, W. M., & Mohamad Arsad, N. (2021). Career maturity and career decision-making self-efficacy as predictors of career adaptability among students in foundation program, Universiti Putra Malaysia. *Asian Journal of University Education*, *17*(4), 464-477.

Brown, S. D., & Lent, R. W. (2021). *Career development and counseling*. Wiley.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Dietrich, J., & Kracke, B. (2009). Parental career-related behaviors: Development and validation. *Journal of Career Assessment*, *17*(3), 155–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072709333502

Dodd, V., Hanson, J., & Hooley, T. (2021). Career readiness scale: Measurement and evaluation. *Journal of Career Studies*, *34*(2), 102–118. https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453211032788

Fajriani, F., Supriatna, M., Bakar, A., & Marsela, F. (2024). Students' career decision-making difficulties: A comparative study based on ethnic background in Indonesia. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, *16*(4), 4462-4476.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Hirschi, A. (2012). Callings and work engagement: moderated mediation model of work meaningfulness, occupational identity, and occupational self-efficacy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *59*(3), 479.

Kim, S., Shim, E., & Lee, Y. (2021). Parental influence on career self-efficacy. *Journal of Career Assessment, 19*(4), 233–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/10690727211045678

Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd ed.). New Age International.

Md Rami, A. A., Zaremohzzabieh, Z., Aziz, F., Ismail, I. A., & Abdullah, H. (2022). Moderating role of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in the relationship between community leadership and social capital in rural Malaysia. *Sustainability*, *14*(24), 16375.

Mohd Ariffin, J. A., Md Rami, A. A., Muhamad Nasharudin, N. A., & Zaremohzzabieh, Z. (2024). Crucial competencies for crisis management: the importance of middle leaders' conceptual skills in navigating turbulent times. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2024.2387551

Mohd Zaini, S. N., Md Rami, A. A., Mohamad Arsad, N., & Mohd Anuar, M. A. (2021). Relationship of academic performance and academic self-concept with career decision-making among UPM undergraduate students. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 7(2), 50–61.

Mohd Siraj, M. A. M., Rami, A. A., Abdul Aziz, N. A., & Mohd Anuar, M. A. (2023). Hubungan Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformasional dan Instruksional Guru Besar dengan Motivasi Guru. *International Journal of Education and Training (InjET)*, (9), 1-11.

Rami, A. A., Zaini, S. N., & Aziz, M. (2021). Career decision making among Malaysian university students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 10*(2), 703–714.

Rami, A. M., Aziz, F., Razali, F., & Ibrahim, A. (2020). Effective local leadership to a successful council in the state of Terengganu, Malaysia. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology, 29*(7), 205–210.

Rehman, S., Suhaidi, N. H. B., & Dullet, G. (2024). The relationship between personality, self-esteem, and career decision making among university students in Malaysia. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Trends*, *6*(3), 34–40.

Rumeli, M. S., Md Rami, A. A., Abdul Wahat, N. W., & Samsudin, S. (2022). Distributive leadership roles for primary school teachers' efficiency in new norm: focus group analysis. Asian *Journal of University Education*, *18*(1), 217. https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v18i1.17190

Savickas, M. L., & Porfeli, E. J. (2012). Career adapt-abilities scale: Psychometric properties and construct validity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *80*(3), 661–673. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.01.011

Savickas, M. L. (2020). Career construction theory and counseling model. *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work*, *3*, 165-200.

Siraj, M. A. M. M., Rami, A. A. M., Aziz, N. A. A., & Anuar, M. A. M. (2022). The relationship between school heads' transformational and structural leadership styles and teachers' teaching motivation. *Asian Journal of University Education*, *18*(1), 244–255.