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RESEARCH ARTICLE

READINESS OF HALAL MANAGEMENT STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

The students' readiness for employability is a growing concern for Higher Education Institutions as it directly impacts the institution's mission, reputation, relationships with stakeholders and its broader contribution to the economy and society. This paper aims to analyse the correlation and effect of personal attributes and basic Halal-related skills on the readiness of final-year Halal Management students for employability. The study was conducted quantitatively through a survey method with 211 final-year Halal Management students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam, Malaysia and Universiti Islam Selangor (UIS), Malaysia. The data analysis techniques employed are Correlation Analysis and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis using the IBM Statistical for Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 28 program. The results indicated there were moderately positive significant relationships between Personal Attributes ($r=.614$, $p<0.01$) and highly positive significance between Basic Halal-Related Skills ($r=.718$, $p<0.01$) with Readiness for Employability. Moreover, the study also indicated that the two independent variables Personal Attributes (X_1) and Basic Halal-related Skills (X_2) affect the dependent variable Readiness for Employability (Y). The correlation coefficient (R) = 0.758 indicates a positive and strong relationship between Personal Attributes and Basic Halal-Related Skills on Readiness for Employability among final-year Halal students at UiTM Shah Alam and UIS. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.574 indicates the independent variable to predict the dependent variable by 57%, while the remaining 43% is influenced by other factors. This study accentuates the pivotal role of students' personal attributes and basic Halal-related skills in fostering students' readiness for employability. The research underscores the importance of these factors in equipping students with the necessary competencies to meet the job market's needs for better graduate employability.

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Introduction:-

Over the past two decades, the Halal industry has experienced significant growth in Malaysia, making it one of the country's fastest-growing industries. As Malaysia expands its presence in the global Halal market, there is a growing demand for skilled professionals in the field. Efforts are currently underway to produce highly skilled and professional individuals including Halal Executives, Halal Consultants, and Halal Auditors. Human capital for the Halal industry requires competent individuals as they hold a crucial position in various industries related to Halal such as food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, logistics, medical devices, slaughterhouses, and consumer goods (Ahmad et al., 2018; Rosli et al., 2022).

However, a major challenge facing the Halal profession is meeting market demands due to a shortage of qualified workforce. Abdul Rahim et al. (2020) suggested that Halal talent in Malaysia is still in the infancy stage. Therefore, there is still a limited pool of talent in the Halal industry specifically those who are competent in the values aspects associated with Halal requirements (Alina et al., 2013). A study reported lack of clear Halal talent development in Malaysia is due to poor career path development, lack of training in various fields of Halal knowledge and poor salary structure (Abdul Rahim et al., 2020). Ibrahim et al. (2022) highlighted the lack of employment opportunities for Halal graduates since there are currently no guidelines or frameworks established for Halal education to suit the job markets. As a result, most firms prefer to outsource their needs (Tafti & Amiri, 2017) rather than recruiting new talent or providing them with comprehensive training to help them become competent in the field which ultimately results in long-term success (Tang et al., 2018; Chiappetta Jabbour et al., 2017). This is due to the time and financial constraints required for talent development (Tafti & Amiri, 2017). Another study stated that finding competent Halal Officials is not easy due to the strict definition outlined in the Malaysian Standards (MS) 1500:2019 (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

The issue of graduates' employability has gained significant attention within High Education Institutions (HEI) due to increasing concern about the quality of graduates entering the workforce as it resonates profoundly with the institutions' mission and reputation. Al-Hinai et al. (2020) argued that the assessment of graduates' readiness for employability carries a subtle degree of complexity. The readiness for employability is intricately linked to the attainment of essential deployable skills and competencies required by stakeholders. This underscores the need for graduates to acquire both academic skills and employable proficiencies to ensure sustainable and productive employment. Therefore, coordination between industries and HEI is essential to determine graduates' readiness for employability and identify the most required skills to produce graduates who can contribute meaningfully, enhance values and drive productivity within their respective roles.

In 2020, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) in collaboration with the Halal Development Corporation Berhad (HDC) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) developed a new standard academic programme for Halal studies. The objective is to enhance the quality and competency of Halal graduates for future job markets in Malaysia (Mokhtar, 2021). This includes the establishment of Malaysian Standard 2691: 2021 Halal Profession-General Requirements to provide an organised structure for halal profession requirements for services in the halal industry; and Programme Standards: Halal Studies 2020 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies at the respective levels as prescribed in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) and enable them to pursue career opportunities in a variety of jobs related to the Halal industry.

Nonetheless, these guidelines are still new, and their effectiveness has yet to be proven. Therefore, based on the Malaysian guidelines above, this study aims to examine the readiness of Halal Management final-year students for employability. The outcome of this study is a signal for HEI to make appropriate adjustments and interventions in their programmes' structures to accommodate the grooming of students for employment purposes.

Literature Review:-**Definition of Employability**

Knight and Yorke (2003) define employability as a set of achievements encompassing skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

The University of Exeter has characterized employability as the establishment of systematic mechanisms by which students can develop their abilities to use and deploy a wide range of skills and opportunities to enhance their academic learning and enable them to become more employable (Lee, 2002). The study further elaborated that employment and employability hold distinct meanings and should be differentiated. While being employed means having a job, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace. Employability from the perspective of HEI is therefore about producing graduates who possess the requisite capabilities and competence. This extends across all facets of university life, encompassing the design of academic programmes and extra curricula activities. Fundamentally, employability centres around the acquisition of skills to learn which is not a product, but an ongoing development process (Lee, 2002).

Harvey (2001) illustrated the multifaceted nature of employability, identifying two categories of definition. The first category relates to the ability of the student to secure, sustain and progress within a job after graduation. The second category is concerned with enhancing the students' attributes (skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities) and empowering the student to become a critical lifelong learner (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Harvey, 2001).

Readiness for Employability

Readiness for employability can be understood to indicate the readiness of HEI students to be employed. It signifies the students' possession of the required employable skills and knowledge; personal attributes and attitudes; and the ability to fulfil the workplace task, thereby facilitating the attainment of the workplace objectives (Mason et al., 2009). Moreover, it implies the need for students to be aware of the career requirements in their future vocation path. A new perspective on students' employability combines the importance of both general soft skills and specific personal attributes, highlighting the value of acquiring practical industrial and work-related skills (Jackson, 2016).

According to Stiwnne and Alves (2010), student readiness for employability refers to the students' competence in gaining a comprehensive range of employability skills, in both broad and specialised proficiencies. In other words, it is the value of the student's personal attributes and the attainment of basic industrial work skills over theoretical excellence.

Employability Skills

Employability skills are additional to technical or academic skills and are required by all employers and across all organizations. Employability from the perspective of HEI is therefore about producing graduates who are capable and able, and these have impacts upon all areas of university life, in terms of the delivery of academic programmes and extra-curricular activities (Nordin, 2009; Othman et al., 2011). Weligamage (2009) revealed a set of employability skills and employer's expectation skills in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1:- Employability Skills.

1	Knowledge skills	(a) Have a body of knowledge in the field(s) studied; (b) Be able to apply theory to practice in familiar and unfamiliar situations; (c) Be able to identify, access, organize and communicate knowledge in both written and oral English; (d) Have an appreciation of the requirements and characteristics of scholarship and research; and (e) Have the ability to use appropriate technologies in furthering all of the above.
2	Thinking skills	(a) Be able to exercise critical judgment; (b) Be capable of rigorous and independent thinking; (c) Be able to account for their decisions; (d) Be realistic self-evaluators; (e) Adopt a problem-solving approach; and (f) Be creative and imaginative thinkers.
3	Personal skills	(a) The capacity for and a commitment to life-long learning; (b) The ability to plan and achieve goals in both personal and professional spheres; (c) The ability to work with others.
4	Personal attributes	(a) Strive for tolerance and integrity; (b) Acknowledge their personal responsibility for their own value judgments; and (c) Their ethical behavior towards others.

5	Practical skills	(a) Be able to use information technology for professional and personal development.
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Description of Skills Required by the University of Sydney (Weligamage, 2009)

Table 2:- Employers' Expectations Skills.

1. Time Management
The ability to manage several tasks at once, to set priorities and allocate time effectively in order to meet multiple deadlines
2. Self-Understanding
The ability to know about strengths and personal characteristics
3. Learning Skills
The ability to learn effectively from a wide range of sources including competencies such as learning what matters, organizing information and critical thinking
4. Teamwork Skills
The ability to work effectively as a member of a team and to understand the dynamics that make teams successful
5. Leadership Skills
The ability to lead, influence and motivate others
6. Problem-Solving
The ability to identify, prioritize and solve problems. The ability to ask the right questions, sort out the many facets of the problem and determine possible solutions
7. Working with Diversity
The ability to respect and tolerate different points of view, values and philosophies of life and deal constructively with people who differ from yourself
8. Career Planning
The ability to manage your career in a constantly changing world of work
9. Understanding Workplace
The ability to grasp the underlying values of the workplace, its dynamics and expectations
10. Risk Assessment Management
The ability to assess alternative courses of action in terms of their consequences and associated risks and to identify alternative ways to reduce inherent risk.

Generic Attributes of Graduates of the University of Sydney (1997)

The above skills in Table 1 and Table 2, when matched together can be summarized as personal attributes and technical skills.

Personal Attributes

Personal attributes play a pivotal role in determining how well an individual can navigate and thrive in various professional environments. Personal attributes refer to the competency of an individual that is causally related to job performance (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). It refers to the capability of a person to apply a certain set of related knowledge, skills, and ability required to successfully perform tasks in a defined work setting. Mitchell (2003) defines competencies as skills, abilities and attributes that complement the field of specialization of employees for work performance.

Researchers have identified numerous personal attributes that contribute to superior job performance. The establishment of guidelines in the Malaysian Standard 2691:2021: Halal Profession-General Requirement (MS 2691: 2021) helps to provide clear, consistent and quality benchmarks for employability. The Standard aims to fulfil the expectations of the Halal industry, maintaining integrity, and developing professional skills which thereby is anticipated to elevate the overall competency and effectiveness of the Halal profession. The MS 2691: 2021 highlights the following personal attributes:

Table 3:- Personal Attributes for each level of the Halal profession.

Personal Attributes	Halal talent	Halal expert	Halal professional
Practising Muslim	√	√	√

(A person that believes and performs Islamic Pillars)			
Adopting ethical practices and upholding integrity principles: fair, truthful, sincere, honest, confidentiality, respectful and discreet.	√	√	√
Tenacious: persistent, focused on achieving objectives.	√	√	√
Practical: realistic and flexible with good time management.	√	√	√
Accountable: able to take responsibility for his/her own actions.	√	√	√
Facilitative: able to assist an organisation's management and employees through the halal assurance system;	√	√	√
Observant: constantly and actively aware of organisational culture and values, physical surroundings, and activities.		√	√
Perceptive: aware of and able to understand the need for change and improvement.		√	√
Versatile: able to adapt to different situations and provide alternative and creative solutions		√	√
Decisive: capable of reaching timely conclusions based on logical reasoning and analytical skills.		√	√
Communicative: able to listen to, and effectively interface with, all levels of an organization, confidently and with sensitivity to its culture.		√	√
Self-reliant: able to act and function independently while interacting effectively with others.			√

No. 6 Malaysian Standard 2691:2021: Halal Profession-General Requirement

These attributes align with the attributes highlighted in other studies on employability, however, are more specific and relevant to Halal Professional employment. Hence, the first hypothesis of this research is to test the impact of students' personal attributes on their readiness for employability.

H₁: There is a significant impact of students' personal attributes on readiness for employability.

Basic Halal-Related Skills

Technical skills are a critical aspect of employability that complements personal attributes. They provide the foundation for an individual's ability to contribute effectively to a specific role or industry, thereby influencing their job prospects, career progression, and overall success in the workforce. Combining strong technical skills with valuable personal attributes creates a well-rounded and highly employable individual.

Technical skills are often referred to as acquired skills that are developed through practice, training, and experience nurtured within individuals (Evans & Waite, 2010; Warhurst & Findlay, 2012). A study by Kanungo & Misra (1992) differentiates competency and skills. According to them, competence is the ability to engage in non-routine cognitive and intellectual activities that would enable a person to cope with uncertainty in the environment. On the other hand, skills are the ability to engage in specific behaviours to accomplish specific routine tasks, which can be learned from training and experience.

According to Leitch (2006), skills are capabilities and expertise in a particular occupation or activity. For Halal professions, there are several specific skills required such as documentation management and audit management (Jamaludin et al., 2015). In managing Halal matters, Halal executives (HE) need specific skills to verify and manage Halal documentation and records, as well as manage the process control associated with Halal documentation.

Furthermore, HE oversees audits and inspections conducted by certification bodies like Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) and Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor (JAIS). They are accountable for ensuring that all raw materials used meet the criteria for qualification and Halal compliance. Critical activities such as raw materials

selection, new product development, production facility cleaning, materials purchasing, incoming material inspection, handling and storage of materials or products, and transportation must be conducted according to established procedures. Therefore, another essential skill needed involves the ability to conduct internal Halal audits and supplier audits to assess compliance with Halal requirements. To achieve these skills, the executives are required to observe and evaluate audit findings, as well as coordinate and facilitate external Halal audits in collaboration with relevant authorities (Rosli et al., 2022).

Jais (2019) and Hassan et al. (2015) also elaborated on the managerial skills for Halal executives to comply with that are stipulated in the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and Halal Assurance Management System (HAMS) that align with ISO 22000, MS 1480, MS 1500, and HAS 23000 standards. HE is responsible for coordinating the implementation of HAMS and Halal Assurance System (HAS) and reporting to the management on the effectiveness and suitability of the systems. HE must ensure all staff are always adhering to the Halal and food safety standards as set by JAKIM, JAIS etc. In addition, HE leads the Internal Halal Committee (IHC)/Halal Management Team (HMT) and trains all staff to ensure compliance with Halal manufacturing standards. They are responsible for handling all types of Halal and food safety certification applications, including new products, new applications, and renewals.

Due to the risks involved, employers in the Halal industry prefer candidates with experience in managing Halal-related operations. This poses a challenge for fresh graduates who typically have a shorter duration of internship experience, usually six months to four months as required by their universities (Rosli et al., 2022). The requirement for experience reflects employers' concerns about the potential risks associated with hiring individuals with limited practical experience. It is commonly believed that longer experience in the industry leads to greater knowledge and skills among employees. Employers recognize the value of experienced and knowledgeable employees in contributing to organizational learning and fostering creativity (Hamad, 2019).

To address this challenge, fresh graduates aiming to work in the field of Halal talents are suggested to enhance their employability by participating in professional courses that augment their skills and knowledge, such as obtaining a Halal Executives certificate. By doing so, they can bridge the experience gap and increase their chances of securing employment in the industry (Hassan et al., 2015; Nurathifah et al., 2019).

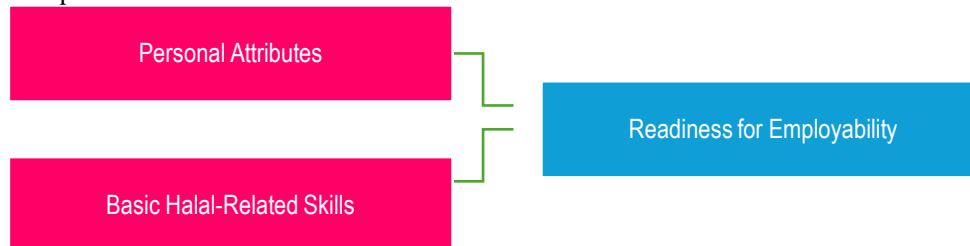
Therefore, this study will test the students on the basic Halal-related skills in managing Halal and Halal Assurance Management (HAS) documentation, Managing Halal Certificate and Managing Halal Internal Audits. Hence, the second hypothesis of this research is to test the impact of students' basic Halal-related skills on their readiness for employability.

H₂: There is a significant impact of students' basic Halal-related skills on readiness for employability.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the above, a conceptual framework has been established between the independent variables (Personal Attributes) and the dependent variable (Readiness for Employability), illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1:- Conceptual Framework.



Methodology:-

This research is a descriptive and explanatory study due to its scope. In this context, the descriptive study aims to describe the set of variables related to Personal Attributes, Basic Halal-Related Skills and students' Readiness for

Employability. On the other hand, an explanatory study tries to understand and explain the relationships between a set of variables related to personal attributes, Basic Halal-Related Skills and students' Readiness for Employability.

A quantitative research approach was used in this study, which is a descriptive and cross-sectional study. The descriptive design focuses on collecting information to answer students' readiness for employability through surveys in UiTM Shah Alam and UIS. The survey methods aim to get answers from the respondents and were distributed among them, by online Google form including the closed-ended question. The quantitative is collected according to the established appropriate research methodology and questionnaires and uses research approaches such as structured observation, online surveys, and questionnaires to get results from respondents. The information is gathered by performing statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. This approach is the statistical methodology required to analyse numerical data with the help of applications of SPSS. This study used the deductive method, starting with the hypothesis, and the end results would be confirmed or rejected.

Instrument

A research instrument is a tool used to measure observed natural and social phenomena. The measurement scale used in this study is the Likert scale. The Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of a person or group of people about social phenomena. The questionnaire consists of four sections, where the first section A addresses respondent demographics, followed by questions in Section B relating the Personal Attributes, the third section, C, is a question about Basic Halal-Related Skills and section D is about student Readiness for Employability, which made use of a Likert scale one to five ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The respondents of this study were requested to indicate their level of perceptions on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Population

Saunders et al. (2015) argue that a population is a set of subjects whose qualities and characteristics are aimed by researchers to focus on. The population in this study are final-year Halal Management students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam and Universiti Islam Selangor (UIS), which comprises 437 students.

Sampling

Saunders et al. (2015) define a sample as a part which represents the general population studied. The study argued that the sample is a portion of the characteristics of the population. Based on the description, the sample collection in this research employs purposive sampling. The sample size is obtained based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which requires a sample size of 205 for a population of 437. Therefore, the questionnaires distributed to 211 respondents were found usable for the analysis, obtaining a 100% response rate.

Table 4:- Sample Size.

Category	Population	Sample Size
UiTM Shah Alam	356	167
UIS	81	44
Total	437	211

Data Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis will explain simple summaries of the statistical data presented. The data will be measured using the mean score interpretation in Table 5.

Table 5:- Mean Score Interpretation.

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.20	Medium
3.21 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

Moidunny (2009) in Hamzah et al. (2016)

Reliability Test

A reliability test is conducted to test the data consistency. Table 6 represents the variables of the reliability test conducted throughout Cronbach's Alpha test. A scale of more than 0.7 for Cronbach's Alpha test is considered very good, whereas more than 0.9 is excellent (Hair et al., 2015). The Cronbach's Alpha for the Personal Attributes is 0.969, 0.953 for Basic Halal-Related Skills and 0.917 for students' Readiness for Employability confirming that all the variables are excellent and reliable.

Table 6:- Reliability Test.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Item
	.975	51
Personal Attributes	.969	36
Basic Halal-Related Skills	.953	10
Readiness for Employability	.917	5

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

To answer the problems in this study, multiple linear regression analysis was employed. Regression analysis is a study of the dependence of the dependent variable with one or more independent variables, to estimate and predict the population average or the values of the dependent variable based on the values of the known independent variables (Kurniawan et al., 2020). The regression equation in this study is to find out how much influence independent or independent variables are Personal Attributes (X_1), Basic Halal-Related Skills (X_2), on Readiness for Employability (Y). The equation of multiple linear regressions can be seen from the following formula:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

- Y = Dependent Variable (Readiness for Employability)
- a = Constant
- b_1 = Regression Line Coefficient
- b_2 = Regression Line Coefficient
- X_1 = Independent Variable (Personal Attributes)
- X_2 = Independent Variable (Basic Halal-Related Skills)
- e = Error / Confounding Variable

Results:-

Demographic Profile

The results show (Table 7) that the majority of respondents were female (66.4%). Most (72%) of the respondents were aged 23 - 24 years old. Besides, 56.9% of respondents were diploma holders, 49.8% obtained a CGPA of 3.50-4.00, 50.2% were financially dependent on their parents, and 34.1% of the parent's income was below RM3000. 41.2% are staying with their parents. Most respondents are from UiTM Shah Alam (79.1%), 69.7% have not completed their internship, 54% respondents have actively been involved in any curriculum activity at the faculty level, 73% have not possessed any Halal Executive certificate, 57.8% have not attended any Halal-related training other than Halal Executive training, 46.4% have not attended any Halal-related training.

Table 7:- Demographic profile of the survey sample (n=211).

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Male	71	33.6
	Female	140	66.4
Age	21-22	36	17.1
	23-24	152	72
	25-26	19	9
	27-28	3	1.4
	29-30	1	0.5
Educational Background	STPM	41	19.4
	STAM	29	13.7
	Diploma	120	56.9

	Matriculation	21	10
Academic Achievement	2.00 - 2.49	2	0.9
	2.50 - 2.99	13	6.2
	3.00 - 3.49	91	43.1
	3.50 - 4.00	105	49.8
Financial Resources	Scholarship	35	16.6
	Parents	106	50.2
	Zakat	11	5.2
	PTPTN	56	26.5
	Self-Financed	3	1.4
Parent's Income	Below RM3000	72	34.1
	RM3001-RM5000	47	22.3
	RM5001-RM7000	21	10
	RM7001-RM9000	22	10.4
	RM9001 and above	43	20.4
	No Income	6	2.8
University	UiTM Shah Alam	167	79.1
	University Islam Selangor	44	20.9
Current Accommodation	Hostel	48	22.7
	Rented House	76	36
	Parents House	87	41.2
Completed Internship	Yes	64	30.3
	No	147	69.7
Highest Curriculum Involvement	Faculty Level	114	54
	University Level	74	35.1
	State Level	7	3.3
	National Level	8	3.8
	International Level	8	3.8
Possess A Halal Executive (HE) Certificate	Yes	57	27
	No	154	73
Attended Any Halal-Related Training Other Than (HE) Training	Yes	89	42.2
	No	122	57.8
Halal-Related Training	Halal Awareness	83	39.3
	Awareness on GMP	10	4.7
	Awareness on HACCP	17	8.1
	Halal Critical Ingredient	3	1.4
	None	98	46.4

Personal Attributes (Independent Variable)

According to Table 8, the mean score for all items shows a variation between 3.62 (lowest) to 4.84 (highest). Based on Table 5, these means depict a high and very high possession of Personal Attributes among the respondents aligned with the characteristics highlighted in MS2691:2021. The total overall mean for Personal Attributes is 4.18 (very high).

Table 8:- Personal Attributes.

Personal Attributes		Mean
Practising Muslim	I believe in and perform the pillars of Islam	4.78
	I believe it is important for me to follow Allah's command diligently	4.84
	Religious belief influences all my dealings with everyone	4.72
Ethical Practices/ Integrity Principles	I will avoid/declare any conflict of interest that affects the work to be carried out	4.39
	I will maintain the confidentiality of information unless required by law	4.46
	I will not offer my service if I don't have adequate competency in halal-related matters	4.22

Tenacious	I have clear goals in life	4.06
	I follow my plans persistently	3.86
	I am focused on achieving my goals	4.07
Practical	I provide realistic solutions to a problem	3.99
	I am flexible in executing a plan	3.95
	I am able to complete a task within a reasonable time	4.13
Accountable	I am able to take responsibility for my own action	4.32
	I make sure my decisions adhere to the standards of ethical behaviour	4.29
	I maintain my integrity in all situations	4.28
Facilitative	I am able to provide consistent assistance to team members	4.24
	I am able to help weaker team members in solving problems	4.23
	I am able to respect others' attitudes, behaviours and beliefs	4.44
Observant	I am aware of the surrounding cultures and values	4.39
	I can adapt to my surroundings easily	3.98
	I believe by adjusting to my surroundings helps me to progress faster to achieve my goals	4.32
Perceptive	I am able to understand the constant need for change	4.09
	I am aware of the need for improvement	4.45
	I am able to provide excellent ideas and opinions for improvement	4.01
Versatile	I am able to adapt to different situations easily	3.88
	I am able to provide creative solutions to a problem	3.89
	I am flexible in setting priorities	4.08
Decisive	I believe I have adequate logical reasoning and analytical skills	3.93
	I deliver my best in every task given	4.24
	I am able to finish my tasks diligently	4.16
Communicative	I am able to listen to others positively	4.36
	I am able to have effective discussions with everyone	4.22
	I can speak confidently in public	3.53
Self-Reliant	I am able to make my own decisions	3.92
	I rarely need assistance from others	3.62
	I bare the consequences of my mistakes	4.09
Total		4.18

Basic Halal-Related Skills (Independent Variable)

Table 9 illustrates the variation of mean scores for Basic Halal-Related Skills between 3.40 (lowest) and 3.95 (highest). The total mean (3.73) indicates the possession of Basic Halal-Related Skills among the respondents is high.

Table 9:- Basic Halal-Related Skills.

Basic Halal-Related Skills	Mean
Managing Halal and Halal Assurance Management (HAS) Documentation	
I am able to identify the difference between Halal files and HAS documentation.	3.86
I am able to prepare Halal Files.	3.70
I am able to develop Halal Assurance Management (HAS) related documentation.	3.70
I am able to manage the Halal documentation process control.	3.71
Managing Halal Certificate	
I am able to identify the specific requirement of a halal application according to the scheme.	3.95
I am able to apply Halal certificate using MyEHalal System	3.94
I am able to perform the renewal of the Halal certificate.	3.66
Managing Internal Audit	
I am able to conduct an opening meeting for internal Halal Audit	3.40
I am able to observe and evaluate audit findings.	3.61
I am able to prepare non-conformance report.	3.74

Total	3.73
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Readiness for Employability (Dependant Variable)

Table 10 on Readiness for Employability shows a total mean of 3.93 which indicates the readiness of students for employability is high.

Table 10:- Readiness for Employability.

Readiness for Employability	Mean
I believe that I am ready to share my knowledge in the working industry	3.86
I believe that I am ready to explore the working industry	4.05
I believe that I am ready to contribute to the working industry	4.01
I believe that I can make a difference in the working industry	3.86
I believe that the university has prepared me well to embark on the working industry	3.89
Total	3.93

Research Analysis:-

Normality Analysis

This research presents a nonnormal distribution of data. A value beyond -2 and +2 for the skewness and kurtosis are considered indicative of substantial nonnormality (Sarstedt et al., 2022). The absolute value of skewness of -/+2 and kurtosis values of -/+ 7 in Table 5 indicates a distribution more peaked than normal, hence the data is nonnormal.

Table 11:- Normality Test.

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis
Personal Attributes	-1.596	7.926
Basic Halal-Related Skill	-.679	1.474
Readiness for Employability	-.848	1.523

Multicollinearity Analysis

Multicollinearity frequently occurs when there are robust multiple correlations between some or all the variables. This study employs the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) analysis to determine the presence of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity can be determined using the tolerance calculation ($1-R^2$), which requires values greater than 0.1, and the Variance Inflation Factor ($1/\text{Tolerance}$) requires values less than 10. If the tolerance value is less than 0.1 and the VIF is greater than 10, there is a significant issue with multicollinearity, and additional actions must be taken. As shown in Table 12, Personal Attributes ($T=0.613$, $VIF=1.631$) and Basic Halal-Related Skills ($T=0.613$, $VIF=1.361$) all exceeded the cut-off values, indicating that the values met the cut-off and confirmed that there is no issue with multicollinearity

Table 12:- Multi-Collinearity Analysis.

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Personal Attributes	.613	1.631
Basic Halal-Related Skills	.613	1.631

Dependent variable: Readiness for Employability

Correlation Analysis

Next, a linear correlation was tested using the bivariate correlation. It ensures that the correlation between the variables is a linear correlation to proceed with further regression analysis. The finding, as shown in Table 13, indicates that all the variables tested are linear correlations. The results indicated there is a moderately significant relationship between Personal Attributes ($r=.614$, $p<0.01$) and Readiness for Employability; and a highly positive and significant relationship between Basic Halal-Related Skills ($r=.718$, $p<0.01$) and Readiness for Employability.

Table 13:- Bivariate Correlation.

	Personal Attribute	Basic Halal-Related Skills	Readiness for Employability
Personal Attribute	1		

Basic Halal-Related Skills	.611**	1	
Readiness for Employability	.614**	.718**	1

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

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

An examination of Table 14 and Table 15 show that the two independent variables in the standard model are significantly predictive of the dependent variable according to ANOVA statistics [$F(2, 208) = 140.193, p < .001$]. As consequence of the standard regression analysis, the model's degree of predicting the dependent variable was found to be $R = 0.758$. The model's degree of explaining the variance in the dependent variable was $R^2 = 0.574$. Looking at these coefficients, it might be said that the model predicts the dependent variable very well.

Table 14:- Model Summary.

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std Error of the Estimate
1	.758 ^a	.574	.570	.574
a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal Attributes, Basic Halal-Related Skills				
b. Dependant Variable: Readiness for Employability				

Table 15:- ANOVA

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	73.763	2	36.882	140.193	<.001 ^b
Residual	54.720	208	.263		
Total	128.483	210			

a. Dependant Variable: Readiness for Employability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Personal Attributes, Basic Halal-Related Skills

Table 14 also shows that the coefficient of determination (R^2) used to calculate the independent effect (X) on the dependent variable (Y) is 0.574 or 57%. This means that 57% of Readiness for Employability is influenced by Personal Attributes and Basic Halal-Related Skills. The 43% of Readiness for Employability is influenced by other factors not examined.

Whereas correlation coefficient (R) = 0.758 indicates a positive and strong relationship between Personal Attributes and basic Halal-Related Skills of Readiness for Employability among final-year Halal students at UiTM Shah Alam and UIS.

The absolute value of β (Beta) in Table 16 indicates the importance of independent variables. The variable with the highest value is the relatively most important independent variable. On examination, it was found that the Basic Halal-Related Skills received a larger significance with the value of $\beta = .505$, followed by Personal Attributes with the value of $\beta = .493$.

Table 16:- Coefficient.

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
(Constant)	-.003	.277		-.012	.990
Personal Attributes	.493	.084	.340	5.875	<.001
Basic Halal-Related Skills	.505	.059	.498	8.623	<.001
a. Dependant Variable: Readiness for Employability					

Based on the results of primary data processing on the results of the calculation of multiple linear regressions in the table above, the regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = -.003 + 0.493X_1 + 0.505X_2$$

The interpretation of the regression equation is:

- The constant value of $-.003$, meaning that if the Personal Attributes and Basic Halal-Related Skills of Halal Management students are 0, then the employability is $-.003$.
- The value of the regression coefficient of Personal Attributes of 0.493 , meaning that if the student's personal attributes have increased by 1% then the readiness of students for employability will increase by 0.493 .
- The regression coefficient value of Basic Halal-Related Skills is 0.505 , meaning that if the Basic Halal-Related Skill is increased by 1%, then the Readiness for Employability will increase by 0.505 .

In summary, a standard multiple regression was performed between Personal Attributes, Basic Halal-Related Skills and Readiness for Employability. The dependent variable (Readiness for Employability) was regressed on predicting variables of Personal Attributes and Basic Halal-Related Skills. The independent variables significantly predict Readiness for Employability, $F(2, 208) = 140.193$, $p < .001$, which indicates that the two factors under study have a significant impact on Readiness for Employability. Moreover, the $R^2 = .574$ depicts that the model explains 57.4% of the variance in Readiness for Employability.

Additionally, coefficients were further assessed to ascertain the influence of each factor on the criterion variable (Readiness for Employability). H_1 evaluates whether Personal Attributes have a significant effect on the Readiness for Employability. The result revealed that Personal Attributes have a significant and positive impact on Readiness for Employability ($\beta = .340$, $t = 5.458$, $p < .001$). Hence, H_1 is supported.

H_2 evaluates whether Basic Halal-Related Skills have a significantly positive influence on the Readiness for Employability. The results show that Basic Halal-Related Skills have a significantly positive impact on Readiness for Employability ($\beta = .498$, $t = 8.623$, $p < .001$). Consequently, H_2 is supported. The summary of the results is presented in Table 17.

Table 17:- Hypothesis Result.

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	B	t	p-value	Results
H_1	PA \rightarrow RE	.340	5.458	<.001	Supported
H_2	BS \rightarrow RE	.498	8.623	<.001	Supported
R	.758 ^a				
F(3, 208)	140.193				

Note. * $p < 0.05$. PA: Personal Attributes, BS=Basic Halal-Related Skills, RE= Readiness for Employability

Discussion:-

General Findings

The survey depicts the overall mean of Personal Attributes among the final-year Halal Management students at UiTM Shah Alam and UIS for employability is 4.18 (very high), whereas the Basic Halal-Related Skill is 3.73 (high). The mean for Readiness for Employability is 3.93 (high). This indicates that the final-year students are highly ready for employability.

The Correlation Between Personal Attributes, Basic Halal-Related Skills and Readiness for Employability

The results of the correlation analysis show a positive and significant relationship between Personal Attributes (X_1) and Basic Halal-Related Skills (X_2) with Readiness for Employability (Y). Thus, H_1 and H_2 are supported.

The Effect of Personal Attributes and Basic Halal-Related Skills on Readiness for Employability

The results of regression analysis show that Personal Attributes have a positive and significant effect on Readiness for Employability among final-year Halal Management students at UiTM Shah Alam and UIS. This can be seen from the results of the data tested above which shows that variable X_1 has a significant effect on the Y variable. This

indicates the higher the possession of Personal Attributes, the higher the Readiness for Employability. Therefore, H_1 is supported.

On the other hand, Basic Halal-Related Skills also have a positive and significant effect on Readiness for Employability among final-year Halal Management students at UiTM Shah Alam and UIS. This can be seen from the results of the data tested above which shows that variable X_2 has a significant effect on the Y variable. This indicates that the higher the possession of Basic Halal-Related Skills, the higher the Readiness for Employability. Therefore, H_2 is supported.

Conclusion:-

The objective of this study is to analyse the readiness of Halal Management students for employability. This study revealed that possessing Basic Halal-Related Skills has a highly and significantly positive impact on students' Readiness for Employability, followed by Personal Attributes.

Employers commonly prefer technically skilled and experienced candidates over fresh graduates. Therefore, students need to equip themselves with adequate skills to enhance their prospects of securing employment. To augment their qualifications, students need to pursue additional basic Halal training certificates such as Halal Executive Certificate, Halal Awareness, Awareness of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Awareness of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Halal Critical Ingredient, which are not covered in the standard academic programmes. This proactive effort can improve their readiness and chance of future employment.

The findings suggest the academic curriculum designers from the Ministry of Higher Education emphasise the hard skills expected by employers. This study is beneficial to policymakers in Malaysia who are attempting to prepare marketable graduates leading to control of unemployment. The government should expand the number of technical and vocational institutes because these institutions will help to reduce unemployment.

Recommendation For the Future Research:-

This study utilised a non-probability sampling approach hence the result of the study is limited and cannot be generalised to a larger population on statistical grounds. Therefore, this study suggests future research use a larger sample size with more information about the graduates' employability. Future researchers can explore the different independent variables of the graduates' employability such as expectations from the industry feeders. The future study can also precede the same research but with new contexts, from a different perspective yet with the same goals.

Article Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper offers theoretical and practical implications. For theoretical implication, this research fills the gaps in existing research. For practical implications, it is anticipated that a revision in the academic higher education curriculum should be considered to encourage a supportive academic atmosphere to generate students' readiness for employability. This study accentuates the pivotal role of students' personal attributes and basic Halal-related skills in fostering students' readiness for employability. The research underscores the importance of these factors in equipping students with the necessary competencies to meet the job market's needs for better graduate employability.

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