Discovering Motives in Employability Orientation of Undergraduates in Public Universities in Malaysia

Jamaliah Abdul Hamid, Neda Tiraieyari and Jeffrey Lawrence D'silva
Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract: As students approach the end of their academic studies in universities, they begin to position themselves in relation to and develop identities around, their future research and employability. They reflect on their personal agency, motivation and personal dispositions in helping them to be assimilated in future labour market. This qualitative study examines students' perceptions, attitudes and orientations to the labour market and how they begin to make sense of their own futures in the labour market. The issue of being employable from the point of view of students is being integrated into and sustaining positions within, the labour market. This study takes off from an exploration into the holistic context of the student's social environment and their own personal dispositions that eventually influenced their conceptualization of employability and employability orientation.

Key words: Undergraduates, employability, employability orientation, cognitive processing in career decision making, Ideal-type model of student employability orientations

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of employability in the workplace and among young people in the labour market remains an important goal to achieve full employment; quality and productivity at work and cohesion and an inclusion in the labour market (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). Employability refers to the 'continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work throughthe optimal use of one's competences' (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). Employability orientation refers to the motivation to be employable. In recent years, employability has been defined as a more holistic and integrative approach (Gazier, 1998, 2001), emphasizing the impact of both individual characteristics and labour market conditions-on employability orientation. Since, employability is 'the character or quality of being employable'then there clearly must be a role for individual characteristics, personal circumstances labor market and other external factors inexplanations of the responses of employedor unemployed people to potential employment. Employability, it is argued should be understood as being derived from and affected by individual characteristics and circumstancesand broader, external (social, institutionaland economic) factors that influencea person's orientation to get a job.

Literature review: Since 1990's, an individual perspective on employability has emerged (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007). Since, workers are continually required to become more adaptive to changing demands, adopt and learn new roles and skills and modify existing work behavior, much emphasis is given to discovering individual characteristics that influence their adaptability (Fugate et al., 2004), mobility (Van Dam, 2005), career development (Sterns and Dorsett, 1994), occupational expertise (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006) and personal development and lifelong learning (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007).

The individual perspective needs to relate to not only the way individuals come to perceive and understand the labour market they are entering but also the types of dispositions, attitudes and identities they develop around their future researcher and employability. Tomlinson (2007) highlights the research of Holmes (2001) that advocates employability be conceptualised as a form of identity; it is relational, emergent and influenced largely by graduates' 'lived experience' of the labour market. Employability in this sense may be seen to be value and identity-driven, relating to graduates' own dispositions and biographies.

The crucial aspect in relation to higher education students' perceptions, attitudes and orientations to the labour market is how they begin to make sense of their own futures in the labour market. As students near the end of their academic studies they begin to position themselves in relation to and develop identities around,

Corresponding Author: Jamaliah Abdul Hamid, Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

their future research and employability. They look at factors relating to the individual in shaping their future employability in the labor market. They reflect on their personal agency, often self-described in terms of individual motivation and personal dispositions in helping them form beliefs of their future labour market outcomes. The issue of being employable was seen as crucial both in integrating into and sustaining positions within the labour market (Sampson *et al.*, 1999).

The way in work individuals approach the labour market and manage their employability is an on-going social process. Tomlinson (2007)'s research helped to explain students' approaches to their future research and employability and in particular helped to elicit understanding in how students come to view themselves in relation to research and careers and how they come to make sense of who they are as individuals. Tomlinson proposed an ideal-type model of students' orientations to research and careers depicting careerist, ritualist, retreatism and rebel approach to employability. The careerists demonstrates a strong orientation around future research and careers and were more active in their attempt to realise their labour market goals and manage their employability. For the careerists, work and careers formed a central part of their future aspirations. In order to realise the goals they have set, they see the need for optimising their credentials and taking a proactive role in the management of their employability both during their higher education and when they enter the labour market. Whilst the careerists were developing expectations around fulfilling future careers, this did not necessarily take the form of a misplaced optimism about future career progression. Instead, these students appeared sensitive to the difficulties and challenges of their future employability and career progression. Many viewed their career progression in terms of gaining 'on the ground' experience, developing a profile and working their way up. The ritualists were more passive in their approach and tended to lower the stakes for their future employment. This typically involved settling for employment work was viewed to be more secure and less competitive and where their employability would be easier to manage. They were much more passive in their approach to career progression and employability management. For these students, work is viewed largely as a means to an end and tangential to their lives as a whole. Work is something 'you have to do'; it is means of achieving a future income, gaining a return from education and facilitating an adult role and identity. Typical jobs work these students aspired towards were in the public sector such as teaching, social work, public administration and other labour markets work resembled a more bureaucratic structure. The retreatist students looked to extend their youth and continue to enjoy the relatively loosely regulated lifestyles they had, so far experienced. Entering the job market was viewed as a forced pressure. These people find the notion of engaging with the labor market daunting. Their response involved an even greater psychological distancing from the realities of work and the challenges of managing their employability. Their current responses highlight the difficulties underlining some young people's transitions into the labour market and their sense of a limited scope for action. The fourth dimension was the rebel approach to employability work Tomlinson (2007) was not able to identify in his group of respondents in his research study.

Tomlinson's model of employability orientation has thrown light on students' orientation to the labor market (Fig. 1). The question is: How do students arrive at their understanding of their own employability and in the process, what factors informed their perspective of their employability?

Peterson and Merino (2003) proposed the Cognitive Information Processing Model to help students to explore the concept of their own employability. They postulated that career orientations are influenced by self-knowledge work concerns one's own values, interests and skills as well as occupational knowledge work concerns knowledge about target or intended careers. These two types of knowledge form the base work informs and directs problem solving regarding career decision making. The entire problem solving towards career decision making occurs through communication, analysis, synthesis, valuing and execution (the CASVE cycle). In brief the CASVE cycle proposed by Petersen involves.

Knowledge domain
Self-knowledge:
- What are my values, interests, skills and employment preferences
- What am I looking for in an occupation or program of study
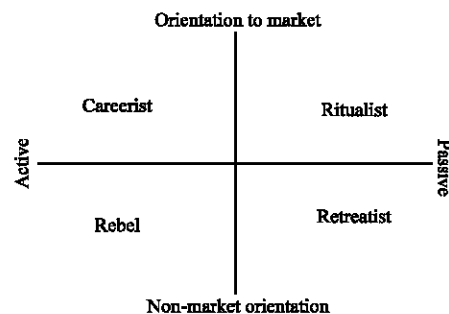- What am I looking for in a job

Fig. 1: Ideal-type model of student orientation (Tomlison, 2007)

Occupational knowledge: Also includes knowledge of programs of study and jobs:

- What kind of job can I get with my education and experience
- What is a typical day for a person employed as a?
- What are the educational and training requirements for?
- How can employers be categorized?

Problem solving and decision-making can be conceptualized in terms of the CASVE cycle.

Communication
External demands:
- Event "I need to choose a major by next semester"
- Significant other "My roommate said that I'll have problems if I don't make a decision soon"

Internal affective, behavioral, or physiological states:

- Emotions "I'm scared about committing myself"
- Avoidance behavior "I'll get started next week"
- Physiological "I'm so upset about this, I can't eat"

Analysis: Enhance self-knowledge (obtained from personal experience, structured exercises, assessment instruments and computer-assisted career guidance systems) by clarifying:

- Values
- Interests
- Skills
- Employment preferences

Enhance occupational knowledge by identifying important characteristics of occupations, programs of study or jobs:

- Knowledge of individual occupations, rograms of study or jobs (obtained from print material, audio-visual material, CACG system, information interviews, shadowing, work experience, academic courses, etc.)
- Knowledge of the structure of the world-of-work (occupations, programs of study or jobs) obtained from the Holland Hexagon, World-of-work map, etc.

Generic information processing skills (capacity to apply the CASVE Model or similar approach).

Metacognitions:
- Self-talk (I need to make a decision)
- Self-awareness (I'm uneasy about this whole process)
- Control and monitoring (What information do I need to obtain about myself and the situation to make a decision

Synthesis
Elaboration: Identify the maximum number of potential alternatives (occupations, programs of study, or jobs).

Crystallization: Narrow potential occupations, programs of study or jobs to a manageable number of options (3-5).

Valuing: Judge the costs and benefits of each alternative to:

- Oneself
- Significant others, e.g. family
- Cultural group
- Community and/or society at large

Prioritize alternatives make tentative primary and secondary choices.

Execution
Formulate a plan for implementing a tentative choice:
- Preparation program (formal education/training experience)
- Reality testing (full-time, part-time and/or volunteer work experience as well as taking courses or training)
- Employment seeking (steps to apply for and get a job)

Communication: Review external demands and internal states:

- Has the gap been closed?
- Have the negative emotions and physiological states been replaced by feelings of serenity?
- Am I taking action to achieve my goal?

Research problem: In our attempt to examine how students arrived at their understanding of their own employability and in the process, the factors that influenced their perspective of their employability, we integrated Tomlinson's employability orientation model with Peterson *et al.* (2003)'s CASVE Model. Tomlinson (2007)'s four typology of employability orientation describes what people hoped to get from being employed and how they viewed employment fulfilled their needs. But, the typology does not clarify the process by work people came to be influenced to adopt any of the

employment orientation perspective or of what employment means to them. The interactive model of employability enables us to seek the interaction between individual factors and elements in their personal and social contexts as well as their perceived conditions of thejob market to understand how people cognitvely process the information to come to their present orientation towards employment and being employed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We interviewed five undergraduates in two public universities in Malaysia. Their ages ranged between early to mid-twenties. Three of the undergraduates were studying human resource development (Tarmizi, Suhaila, Nurhidayah) while the other two studied Chemistry (Mira, Syakeera). Tarmizi, Suhaila and Nurhidayah had done some part time work after completing secondary school before entering the university.

The interviews were done in the campus of the respondents' universities and each interview lasted between 45 min to just over an hour. The taped interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. The data analysis stage was informed but not determined by the models proposed by Tomlinson (2007) and Peterson *et al.* (2003) In the data analysis, we focused on the motives, priorities and other factors that led to the formation of employment perspective. The sections on findings are sequenced according to the emergent themes with regards to motives, priorities and other factors that led to the formation of employment perspective.

RESULTS

We found that researchers research was perceived by the undergraduates as central to life to enable one to achieve a level of self-sufficiency. "Not to be a burden to family members and to others" was a major force that drives motivation to be employed. Work was deemed instrumental as a means to attain higher levels of material improvement in life to provide for the family and to achieve security in life. The responses included.

"Because it is our main source of income to enable us to live a secure life. If someone has a career his life will be more secure" (Suhaila). "Getting a job is important to support yourself. If you don't work you won't have money and you can't do anything" (Taufiq). "Work is important because it will help us to support the future of our family and ourselves" (Mirah). "Work is important to enable us to live a better life" (Syaheera).

Work was perceived as a means to manifest one's social identity and standing in society. Society would not look down on people who had employment. Work will influence how how the society will look at you, said Nurhidayah while Suhaila said "if a person has work, his standing in the society also will be secure.

Work was also the means through one maintains healthy respected integration with the rest of society. It is through work that we interact with different sections of the community and that we reach out to others to work together to accomplish tasks. "If we don't work, we don't interact with other people, we don't get the chance to work with others to complete tasks, so we become like frogs beneath coconut shells" (Syaheera).

The work was perceived as a medium of self-transformation and self-realization. Through research, one is able to prove what one is capable of achieving or doing for example the ability to think creatively and productively and to develop independence. On the other hand if one does not work, one dangerously leans towards developing narrow perspectives and self-centeredness. According to Tarmizi work is a spiritual obligation as well. Work was also perceived as a societal check to ensure the country progresses forward and not regress to egocentrism (Syaheera).

"But if a woman has a career, it gives her a chance to put herself on equal platform with the man at least women won't be looked down by anybody when they have jobs "(NurHidayah). "To me, career shows us who we are, how much we are able to achieve" (Tarmizi). "If we don't work, we don't interact with other people, we don't get the chance to work with others to complete tasks, we become like frogs beneath coconut shells; our society will soon become undeveloped and people will be filled with self-importance" (Syaheera). "Work is also important because through work, we can produce productive ideas to develop our country" (Mira).

"Careers to me is a medium through work we worship. If we perform our work in an honest way, if we do our job with commitment and avoid dishonesty, it means we are doing work in a halal way. So to me, we can also worship through our work" (Tarmizi).

The reasons given by the respondents why work or employment is important fits closely with Tomlinson's ritual orientation to employability in so far as work was viewed primarily as a means to an end and as tangential means to support their lives as a whole. Work was something 'you have to do' as a means of achieving a future income. The objective of employability as a means to fulfil an adult role and fill a social identity were also the reasons cited by these undergraduates work fulfils another characteristic of Tomlinson's ritual orientation towards employability. But, beyond the ritual need for a source of stable income are reasons that resonate with strong familial and social/societal obligation "not to be

burden to one's family and to others". There were awareness that it is through being employed and doing work that self and societal transformation may be achieved. Being employed gives one legitimate status and acceptance by the society and enables one to maintain self-dignity. These reasons would be overshadowed by the materialistic goal of the ritual orientation to employability. But, through Petersen's cognitive analysis of the values one puts into being employed or having a career, we are able to recognize the metalogic behind the desire to seek security and stability in one's employment.

Interestingly, there was no mention of work as a means of gaining a return from education work was another characteristic of ritual purpose of employability. Work was perceived as a natural sequence in life after university as a mandatory option after graduation. "I don't intend to be unemployed!" Mira says and this sums up the views of all the other undergraduates as well. Being employed was the primary goal but being professionally employed in a field that was related to one's academic specialization was an added bonus. In the main, it appeared that employability was very much left to the options in the open job market, thus depending on availability of jobs rather than aiming for target careers. These undergraduates were quick to state counter career plans in the event that they could not get employed in their first choice careers. Work was treated in terms of a realistic goal to support life. As such, work was therefore not equated per se to a return of time, money and effort spent in the field of specialization, they studied in the university. Several excerpts are as follows.

"If I can't become a teacher, may be I shall apply to be a secretary or an administrative officer at a company work requires an HR graduate. I don't really mind what I end up working in as long as I am able to support myself" (NurHidayah). "If I can't be what I target, then maybeI will end up as a teacher like my Mom, even though I do not want to become a teacher if given a choice" (Mira). "If I can't get a job that is related to chemistry, I will accept that. May be my fate is not to be in Chemistry, may be it is in some other field, so I will accept that" (Syaheera).

Although, their approach to employment was pragmatic, these undergraduates nonetheless expressed much confidence in what they would like to become when they graduate. Suhaila, Nurhidayah and Tarmizi all study human resource management, at the National Defense University. Suhaila wants to become a teacher or lecturer as her first choice, Nurhidayah wants to become a teacher as her first choice, Tarmizi only wants to be in the Army profession while Mira and Syaheera who study Chemistry both wanted jobs related to Chemistry as their first

choices. They were explicit and unwavering about their first choices. These choices appear to emerge from their own self-knowledge of their skills, interests, internal values and goals in life. The following illustrate this point.

Suhaila: I want to become a teacher because I feel I have a loud voice.

Nurhidayah: I think I want to be a teacher because mainly I like to be with children. I don't mind if I get a job as a kindergarten or a secondary school teacher because I really like to be with children that's just me. I really like teaching younger children and talking to them.

Tarmizi: I have always wanted to be in the army right from when I was small. I just wanted to be in. When I did get in, I began to learn a lot of stuff. I have learnt now how to iron my own clothes and wash my own shoes. I learned that the whole squad are friends and I learn how to mix around and be friends, etc. Now when I experience the culture see the uniforms, hear the songs they sing, all that I just love it.

Mira: I want to find a job that is related to Chemistry, may be find a job in The National Atom Centre or any job related to chemistry. I think Chemistry is fun.

Syaheera: I want to find work in the field of Chemistry. May be I want to become a lecturer teaching Chemistry or an entrepreneur. Maybe I can open a business involving chemistry. I think Chemistry just suits my character. In Chemistry, we have to be patient in our experiments. And I am the type who don't like to do things hurriedly, so that's why I feel I am suited to becoming a chemist. I am also shy and I find it difficult to communicate with people although I try to improve. A chemist has to be very methodical and careful, otherwise consequences are going to follow. I think I am careful.

The undergraduates also knew what jobs they would definitely not choose as a career. Again, the avoidance of some careers appear to come from an awareness of their personalities and values rather than a depth of knowledge of what the job or work entails. All respondents draw a firm line on getting jobs that were halal in their form, intent and product or service. Nurhidayah will never choose any career or job that sells service or product that was non-halal; Suhaila and Tarmizi feel the same way. Suhaila would rather be a sweeper if that was the only halal job she could find after graduation but Tarmizi will never want to become a sales person who has to do public soliciting. Mira never ever wants to become a teacher because, so many people are already teachers and also because

teaching does not really need one to be skilled. Mira will also never consider to become a doctor because doctors are always on call and spend so much time in the hospital, away from home. Syaheera never wants any job that deals in artistic or creative work.

In Tomlinson's typology, being assertive in knowing what one wants to become and what one can achieve through one's career are dominant characteristics of the careerist. However, in contrast to Tomlinson's careerist's dominant attitude of "doing all you can" inone's career, (i.e., being assertive of whatone wants to get out of one's career and being proactive to train to meet the career market expectations), these undergraduates demonstrated low to moderate assertiveness in making plans or the necessary preparations to secure or enter employment in the their first choice careers. Yet, when we probed into their moderate assertiveness in making plans to secure employment in their field of interest, the response indicated a depth of career assessment. All five respondents wanted to work with the government but knowing that the government offered limited positions, their pursuit of their first career choice was therefore, low-key or muted. Mira and Syakeera professed that finding employment in careers of their choice (Chemistry) in the open labour market would be tough and both were prepared to find other jobs. Meanwhile, Nurhidayah and Suhaila would rather fall back on small business ventures such as bakery and be self-employed as an alternative if the open job market failed them. Tarmizi on the other hand would continue his studies if he failed to be employed. Using Peterson's cognitive synthesis of employment opportunities, these undergraduates were seen to demonstrate flexibility rather than assertiveness in their employment orientation. Flexibility reflects openness to other career options as an objective of gaining employment hence, it I ndicates positive employment- orientation. Flexibility is an option between alternatives but flexibility might just have been discounted in the careerist typology of Tomlinson's Model.

Two exceptions were Nurhidayah and Tarmizi who both had clear plans to gain entry into their first choice careers, although like all the rest of the undergraduates they too ultimately had to think of contingent plans if they continued to face rejection in their choice of careers. "Even though, I failed in an earlier application to become a teacher, I think I will re-apply after I graduate from this university. I really want to become a teacher" (NurHidayah. "But if I can't get areal job in the army, I shall still try to be hired to do like some extra duty or some extra work that the army wants, I don't mind because I really want to be in the army. I just want to work in the Army" (Tarmizi).

Although, the undergraduates knew what they wanted to be, yet when asked about specific details of their aspired careers, they expressed low knowledge in the careers of their choice. They had vague ideas about job titles or positions in the careers of their choice, the pay scheme and the nature of work other than in a broad general sense. Much of their preference for the career choice appeared driven by self-knowledge of their own interests, abilities and values rather than by a solid knowledge about the careers they aspired. Sampson *et al.* (1999) distinguish self-knowledge as opposed to occupational knowledge to describe the two levels of awareness that affect career decision making. Tarmizi for instance, in spite of his deep interest in the army had very little idea of positions and ranks in the army and neither did he care for those statuses because all he wanted was to be in the army since he loved the discipline, the order, the self-sufficiency and the songs. But, loving all the regalia and routine describe a "surface fit" to the aspired career. For Nurhidayah, having a great affection for children too appears a "surface fit" to a teaching career. She is not able to delve deeper in what a teaching job would require. Suhaila said she has a loud voice, likes to read and likes sharing what she knows" to explain her career choice as a lecturer while Mira and Syaheera who both wanted to work in jobs related to Chemistry because she wanted to produce something useful for everybody (Mira) and she believed she had all the qualities of being a good chemist such as being careful not doing things hurriedly and patience (Syaheera). All these appeared to emerge from self-knowledge of personal characteristics but clearly none of these undergraduates were career savvy or knowledgeable about their intended jobs. While appearing to know what career they would like to pursue, these undergraduates lacked depth of understanding of the requirements of the job and the structure of those careers. They were ready to enter employment to be employed but most did not appear to have an understanding of employment.

As a result, the skills and interests expressed by these undergraduates appeared to have external "surface fit" to the careers, rather than "intrinsic fit" to the careers. Personal interests and values may be deemed as external fits since they do not always match the requirements of the job and often results in the individual making career change once the "mismatch" reaches in tolerable level. Indeed, most of the respondents claimed that they would stay for only a while in the job that is in conflict of their personal interest. Tarmizi described that if the job compromises on his values and if things still did not change after much protestations, he would not hesitate to leave. Mira said she would only stay for a short while in a job that made so many demands on her personal life.

On the other hand, intrinsic fit emerges from a depth of understanding of what the job or career requires, including the potential of mismatches between personal interest and job requirements but having the knowledge about what the job expects, one may choose to acquiesce or negotiate work subsequently may result in an intrinsic fit whereby the individual knowingly makes the commitment to stay in the job. Interestingly, the intrinsic fit surfaced in cases where the job was a limited option and no other option was feasible or available. Said Syakeera, "If I have to find work that is not related to Chemistry, I will do my best to like the job". Suhaila said she would try her best to cultivate an interest in the job because one must work. Intrinsic fit to career appears to bounce off from career misfits.

Clearly the predominance of self-knowledge over occupational knowledge can help to probe deeper into the employability orientations of undergraduates. What were some personal points of interests that the undergraduates expressed when seeking for jobs? The common points of interests were to find jobs that "were near to the home so that I can easily visit/look after parents/siblings/family", "they were interested in doing" and "promised job stability". Others factors included balance between family and work, good work environment and work satisfaction.

"Think to be able to balance between family and career. Not just high pay. Of course work satisfaction is also important" (Syaheera). "High pay and having a good fun place to work in are equally important. High salary alone cannot compensate for lack of friends, feeling of isolation. I would rather have a low pay but a good fun place to work in" (NurHidayah). Work satisfaction is important to me. I don't want to work just for the sake of the money. We must like what we are doing so that we will produce the best, not just get the job done" (Mira). "I don't want a job where the hours are irregular even though the salary is high" (Mira).

DISCUSSION

It has been shown that Petersen's Cognitive Processing Model complements Tomlinson (2007)'s Employability Orientation Model to help us understand the motives and motivation underpinning the employability orientation of undergraduates in Malaysia. We found no 'retreatist' or 'rebel' orientation towards employment, although we believe that there would be some likely retreatists amongst the wider population of undergraduates. Our findings confirmed that the majority of our respondents exhibited ritual employability orientation but probes into their individual context and values revealed far more complex motives that at times appeared contradictory to the qualities or characteristics associated with ritual orientations to employment. For example, the importance of securing a stable source of income was closely tied to family responsibilities and social acceptance and it adds a whole different schema or perspective to the picture of a potential employee who only ritually seeks to have constancy, regularity and security inemployment as a means to have income. Similarly, the characteristics of the careerist orientation in Tomlinson's Model appeared constrained by the pragmatic conditions of available work options of the undergraduates in our study. In other words, the motives underpinning employment orientations help us to ask questions and query assumptions such as whether career oriented individuals are qualitatively better in attitude and work commitment than the ritual oriented persons? Are ritualists genuinely passive in their orientation to job market conditions? Could it be possible that those who fall in the ritualist category of employment orientation are actually careerists whose life and family contexts cause them to seek and practise regularity in their work even as they personally strive to give their best commitment to their careers? What ought to be the conditions in the job market to encourage more people to adopt careerists employment orientation? Since, employment orientation is a process that undergoes continuous transformation as a result of experience, maturity and changing context, it is therefore not impossible that an individual's employability orientation could shift from one orientation to another as a result of the motives and priorities that he or she encounters over time. It would appear that if we integrate motives with employability orientation, we would have a clearer understanding of employability orientation in relation to market orientation as a continuum that is affected by the individual motives and context.

Employability orientation of these Malaysian undergraduates was also affected by their awareness and observance of finding halal means of living. Although, the natural inclination was to find jobs that were related to their fields of specialization or interest, the principle of halal was the main determinant of employability. In this regard, employability was not driven purely by desire to enter the labour market; nor by the match of skills and knowledge to the requirements of the labour market. Instead, employability was an optionthat had to comply with the utmost requirement of their religious faith, failing work the alternative options were self-employment or even employment that were "below" their academic qualifications. Employability here is not a form of free consumption of job market opportunities. Being employable is not just a one-way decision of employment

agencies on applicants; instead being choosing to be employable is a state of individual choice that was made on the basis of the job's compliance to a certain set criteria (here, faith) and beyond the skills and attitude of the labour market. We do not this form of orientation fits readily into Tomlinson's ideal type employability orientation.

Twenge *et al.* (2010) reported that the generation Y would rather seek jobs that offered them a reasonable life balance. Our data supports this view as our respondents expressed their preference for jobs that allowed them time to take care and be with their families. They did not want jobs that were greedy for their time. Having interest in the jobs they do and work satisfaction were other criteria the undergraduates cited suggesting that their employability orientation was affected by the positive intrinsic returns they hoped to find in the jobs. Although, high pay was important, it was not as important as having fun in doing the job. It would seem that employability orientation is a projection of life well-being rather than simply as an occupational design. There is much truth is the common adage we hear these days that young people tend to treat work and work place as an extension of their personal/family and social life. Thus, employability orientation was also conceptualized as orientation to work as a social space and event.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, our findings show that employability orientation is emerged from holistic and integrated realitiesof the individual. Beyond acquiring skills and attitudes required in the labour market, undergraduates were actively choosing to define their own employability and with that their orientation to being employable.

REFERENCES

Fugate, M., A.J. Kinicki and B.E. Ashforth, 2004. Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions and applications. J. Vocational Behav., 65: 14-38.

Gazier, B., 1998. Employability: Definitions and Trends. In: Employability: Concepts and Policies, Gazier, B. (Ed.). European Employment Observatory, Berlin, Germany.

Gazier, B., 2001. Employability: The Complexity of a Policy Notion. In: Employability: from Theory to Practice, Weinert, P., M. Baukens, P. Bollerot, M. Pineschi-Gapenne and U. Walwei (Eds.). Transaction Publisher, New Brunswick, ISBN: 9781412822480, pp: 3-23.

Hillage, J. and E. Pollard, 1998. Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis. Department for Education and Employment, England, ISBN: 9780855228897, Pages: 51.

Holmes, L., 2001. Reconsidering graduate employability: The graduate identity approach. Qual. Higher Educ., 7: 111-119.

McQuaid, R.W. and C. Lindsay, 2005. The concept of employability. Urban Stud., 42: 197-219.

Peterson, G.W., J.P. Sampson, R.C. Reardon and J.G. Lenz, 2003. Core concepts of a cognitive approach to career development and services. Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and career Development, Dunlop Success Center, Florida University, USA.

Peterson, R.A. and M.C. Merino, 2003. Consumer information search behavior and the internet. Psychol. Market., 20: 99-121.

Rothwell, A. and J. Arnold, 2007. Self-perceived employability: Development and validation of a scale. Personnel Rev., 36: 23-41.

Sampson, J.P., J.G. Lenz, R.C. Reardon and G.W. Peterson, 1999. A cognitive information processing approach to employment problem solving and decision making. Career Dev. Q., 48: 67-74.

Sterns, H.L. and J.G. Dorsett, 1994. Career development: A life span issue. Exp. Aging Res., 20: 257-264.

Tomlinson, M., 2007. Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market. J. Educ. Work, 20: 285-304.

Twenge, J.M., S.M. Campbell, B.J. Hoffman and C.E. Lance, 2010. Generational differences in work values: Leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing. J. Manage., 36: 1117-1142.

Van Dam, K., 2005. Employee attitudes toward job changes: An application and extension of Rusbult and Farrell's investment model. J. Occup. Organiz. Psychol., 78: 253-272.

Van der Heijde, C.M. and B.I.J.M. van der Heijden, 2006. A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability. Hum. Resour. Manage., 45: 449-476.