

## The Factors That Influence Unemployment Among Fresh Graduates

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### 1. Introduction

Employment means to do work which is paid for the results or generally can be said to be the state of having a paid job by an employer when they recruit any employees to their company or business (Heng et al., 2023). When a person agrees to start employment, they have to provide their employer with any job or task which they have requested on the agreement of the type of position the job will be. The employees consider the work based on their skills or studies. Before starting employment, the employee must find a specified job that can be suitable according to their skills and knowledge, but this also can be put aside since there are jobs which offer training to new employees who want to learn new skills about a new type of job they prefer.

As there is employment, there will also be unemployment. Unemployment is a condition where an individual is proactively looking for a job but cannot get any jobs they can work. The individual may experience unemployment at some point, even though they are currently employed. It is not a surprise and may eventually happen (Abd. Rahman et al., 2020). Unemployment can significantly affect people's lives, as only some can survive without having a salary. Anybody could experience unemployment, an unpleasant problem that should be resolved. If unemployment persists, riots and insurrection will spread throughout the nation, potentially affecting the country's economy. This risky situation would result in a massive loss for the country (Hossain et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the population is expanding more quickly than the number of job opportunities available in the market. This is another factor that may contribute to unemployment.

Unemployment does not mean a person is too lazy to work; most reasons for unemployment are the lack of factors and many issues causing people not to want to accept any jobs nearby or any easily reached application. It gives people much to think about as they believe they will not be happy with certain workplace factors and even the position offered. However, in this era of the millennium, there are many reasons a person is not interested in going to their workplace, and they choose to quit. Among them are being offered a low salary or underpaid, being demanded with the level of expectations from the company, needing more work experience as a fresh graduate, and needing the proper job scope.

### *1.1 Problem Statement*

An individual willing and capable of working but not holding a paid position is called an unemployed person. This issue is considered a critical measure of the economy's condition. The state of the economy today has made unemployment a top priority for both developed and developing countries. However, different factors affect this prevalent issue differently in each country (Hossain et al., 2018).

The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2020) published the Graduates Statistics 2020, which shows that there were 5.36 million students who graduated in 2020, a 4.4% increase from the 5.13 million students who graduated in 2019. The number of unemployed graduates was 4.4%, 202,400 in 2020, an increase from 165,200, 3.9 percent in 2019. Meanwhile, in 2021, the unemployment rate increased by 4.1% from 4.4% in 2020. The rate of unemployment is expected to grow more in 2023, according to the finance ministry report. These days, graduate unemployment is a global issue impacting Malaysia and the whole globe. International Labor Organization reports that unemployment happens to those who have not had a job for the previous four weeks despite actively seeking one (Morozova, 2017). Even though unemployment is average, it becomes troublesome when someone is unemployed for an unreasonably long duration. Tengku Kamarul Bahrim et al. (2019) found that graduates often experienced several indirect effects of unemployment. The DOSM reports that the number of people in the labour force increased by 0.2% each month to 16.6 million from 16.57 million in the previous year.

The top 10 areas where Malaysian graduates need help to cope and get a job are management, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, leadership, creativity, proactiveness, self-assurance, and interpersonal skills (Jeffrey & Abdul Rahim, 2022). Meanwhile, according to Ghani (2022), the issue of graduate unemployment is caused by eleven different variables. These include the lack of ties between academia and business practice, the lack of training for job readiness, the population's sharp rise and fall, educational advancement, the recession, the calibre of education, the competencies, and dispositions of graduates, and so on. These elements play a part in the graduates' difficulty locating jobs that match their qualifications.

### *1.2 Research Objectives*

- i. To investigate the relationship between compensation, level of expectations, work experience and job scope towards unemployment among fresh graduates.
- ii. To examine which one of the factors is the most influential that leads to the unemployment issue among fresh graduates.
- iii. To determine the impacts suffered by the fresh graduates due to prolonged unemployment.

### *1.3 Scope of The Study*

This research focused on investigating the factors of unemployment among fresh graduates. The scope of this research is the Diploma and Degree students from the University College of Yayasan Pahang (UCYP) who have recently graduated in the same or past year of 2020-2022. This study aims to gather data on UCYP who used and are currently unemployed to determine the reason and impact behind the issue. Specifically, it seeks to understand how the mismatch between graduate goals, employment needs, and opportunities has resulted in underemployment and unemployment among recent graduates. This is because more recent domestic and foreign graduates compete in the market group, academic institutions pressuring students to pursue one, and their curricula must keep up with industry standards (Seng, 2018).

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Unemployment*

According to Yusof and Jamaluddin (2017), unemployment is when an individual can work and actively look for a job but cannot find any. A person must actively seek compensation and be part of the labour force to be classified as unemployed. Underemployment, on the other hand, is a phrase used to describe situations where people find work for shorter periods than usual. It refers to part-time, seasonal, day, or temporary workers. Most governments and labour departments gather data on unemployment to ensure that they control each

nation's economic health. The trends and statistics can affect general economic trends for every specific country. Unemployment is another crucial economic indicator that shows whether workers can find lucrative jobs and contribute to the productive production of the economy. Reduced overall economic output is the result of a greater unemployment rate.

### *2.2 Compensation*

When anything is said to be compensated, someone has been paid money for their services. Salary and earnings are included in a compensation package and any commissions, incentives, or benefits specific to each employee's employment. In the factor of unemployed, there are so-called low salaries or underpaid (Husin et al., 2021). The underpaid or low-paid provides or earns only a small amount of money. They are deemed low if wages fall below two-thirds of the national mean or median for gross hourly pay. In this research, compensation becomes the most significant concern among the unemployment of fresh graduates. Because they are new to employment, some companies offer fresh graduates too little pay, which is insufficient for them to survive in this economy.

### *2.3 Level of Expectation*

People would have high expectations when someone hopes or expects that something will be very good or successful. Most companies demand graduates with sufficient skills and abilities to work immediately (Maripaz & Ombra, 2016). In this research, the level of expectations is also a reason for unemployment because companies do not want fresh graduates who do not give them what they expect. A company with high expectations among new graduates and expects them to have all the experiences while just being freshly graduated from college. The college needs to teach all the required information as having real-life work experience. Companies are searching for graduates who can successfully combine solid academic performance with "soft skills", including flexibility, problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal abilities. The employer's expectations have altered the new, rising trends in the sectors. These days, a new set of non-cognitive talents has taken precedence over academic competence when evaluating recent graduates (Kong, 2017).

### *2.4 Work Experience*

According to Shakur et al. (2020), work experience is the process through which an individual learns practical wisdom from an employer about a specific function, company, or career path. Working experience is the time a young person, usually a student, spends working for a business to obtain expertise essential to their subject of study. It should fit with the student's interest and the employer's demand. Work experience is vital because it helps to teach people how to gain skills in the process. This research shows that unemployment among fresh graduates is a factor because some companies do not want to hire new employees without job experience. Still, without a first job, a fresh graduate cannot obtain unique work experience or any experience at all since the company has very high hopes for high work experience.

### *2.5 Job Scope*

Job scope can be referred to as the work limit given to the employee. The duties, goals, responsibilities, scope, and working circumstances of a job, among other things, are included in the job scope. As per Md Razak et al. (2014), a work scope or job description is a documented account of the duties, methods, conditions of employment, and circumstances of the job holder. It must appropriately depict the tasks, workplace culture, and working conditions. In this research, job scope is considered as the reason for unemployment because, in Pahang, there is little job scope offered to fresh graduates as it is smaller and more advanced than Selangor. Most Malaysians have a mismatch in the job market due to the country's economic structure, and this is heavily dependent on low-skilled workers in the plantation, construction, and low-end services sectors.

### *2.6 Unemployment Among the Fresh Graduates*

Recent years have seen an increase in unemployment, which has presented challenges for Malaysian graduates seeking the job. Because it could damage Malaysia's educational system's credibility and make some businesses lose faith in our graduates, the rising jobless rate is a serious worry. Unemployment is a problem that can arise in any nation in the world. Individuals may experience unemployment if they are active in the labour market (Hossain et al., 2018). Unemployment will undoubtedly contribute more to the challenges unemployed graduates face, the nation, society, and possibly the entire country, if no action is taken. If the nation's unemployment rate stays high, riots and revolts will also occur, which can disrupt the country's economy. This pressing issue will result in a significant loss for the country. Malaysia's GDP annual growth rate decreased from 6.3% in April 2014 to 4.2% in April 2016 (Department of Statistics, 2016). One of the main factors that cause the issue is unemployment, which resulted from the rate of population growth outpacing the rate of new job opportunities created by the market.

### 2.7 Impacts of Prolonged Unemployment

Prolonged unemployment often serves as a gateway to poverty, triggering a series of impacts that can push individuals or families below the poverty line. The most immediate effect of prolonged unemployment is the loss of a regular income stream (Heng et al., 2023). Individuals can cover basic expenses like housing, utilities, food, and healthcare with a steady paycheck. Savings deplete rapidly, pushing individuals closer to poverty. As the duration of unemployment extends, financial stability diminishes. Debts may accumulate, savings run out, and individuals might borrow money, leading to a cycle of indebtedness. Furthermore, without a job, recent graduates lack a stable income to cover living expenses, including rent, food, student loan payments, and other necessities (Hill et al., 2017). This financial strain can quickly deplete savings or lead to debt, pushing them towards poverty.

Besides, prolonged unemployment can significantly impact mental health, leading to a range of issues due to the stress, uncertainty, and financial strain associated with being out of work for an extended period (O'Halloran, 2018). The constant worry about financial stability, meeting basic needs, and uncertainty about the future can lead to heightened stress levels. Anxiety can intensify as individuals struggle to secure a job despite their efforts. Repeated job rejections or feeling overlooked in the job market can erode self-esteem and confidence. Individuals may start doubting their abilities and qualifications, impacting their motivation to continue searching for employment. Due to that reason, Prolonged unemployment among fresh graduates often leads to feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness, and a loss of self-worth.

Moreover, prolonged unemployment can have significant impacts on physical health. Insomnia and other sleep-related disorders can result from sleep patterns being disturbed by the stress and worry brought on by unemployment. Poor sleep quality can further impact physical health, affecting overall well-being. Chronic stress resulting from unemployment can weaken the immune system and make individuals more susceptible to various illnesses. It can contribute to conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and digestive issues (Lewańczyk et al., 2023). Financial constraints due to unemployment may lead fresh graduates to adopt unhealthy lifestyle habits. The inability to afford nutritious food might result in poor dietary choices, impacting their overall health and energy levels.

Besides that, prolonged unemployment often leads to social isolation, which can profoundly affect an individual's well-being and mental health (Morrish & Medina-Lara, 2021). For fresh graduates, the impact of prolonged unemployment on social isolation can be particularly challenging as they transition from the structured environment of education to the uncertainties of the job market. After leaving the educational environment, where daily interactions with peers are every day, prolonged unemployment means a sudden loss of this social network. Graduates might feel isolated and disconnected as friends start working or pursuing different paths.

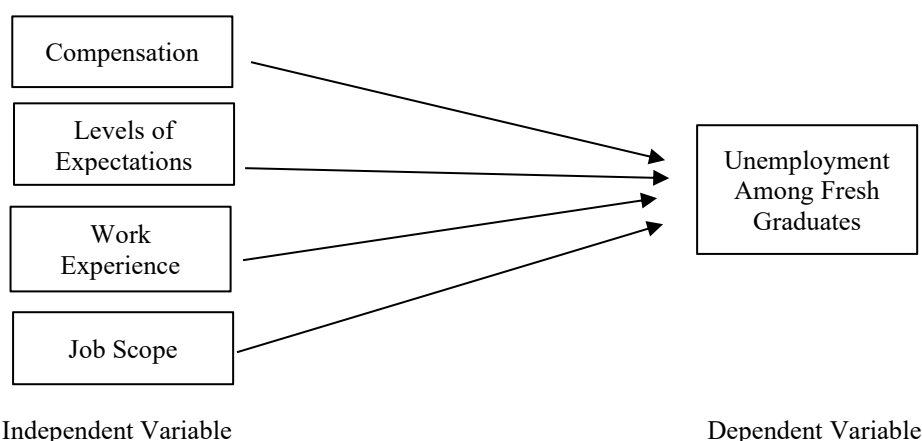


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Unit of Analysis

Respondents to this study were gathered from the alumni list of the Faculty of Management, University College of Yayasan Pahang. They were alumni from seven courses from Diploma and Degrees involved in the investigation. It consists of alumni Bachelor of Business Administration, Diploma in Executive

Secretarial ship, Diploma in Management of Tourism, Diploma in Accounting, Diploma in Marketing Business, Diploma in Business Management and Diploma in New Media Marketing.

### 3.2 Sample Size

There were 400 recent graduates in the demographic that was the subject of this study. The sample size is the quantity of observations applied to a specific population. For the research, 196 samples were used from alumni from the University College of Yayasan Pahang, Kuantan, and Pahang (Krecjie & Morgan, 1970).

### 3.3 Sampling Techniques

In this study, the most suitable sampling technique is snowball sampling. The “snowball” sampling is a research technique through survey and data registration. Snowball sampling begins with identifying several participants who fit the study's requirements. These initial participants act as "seeds," providing access to others within the population and forming a chain of referrals (Dragan & Isaic-Maniu, 2013). In addition, it allows researchers to explore the connections, relationships, or networks within the population being studied.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Response Rate

A total of 152 out of 196 questionnaires were collected among the contacted fresh graduates of the University College of Yayasan Pahang. The questionnaires were distributed via Google through many forms of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and some face-to-face. The response rate for this study was 78%.

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Compensation	4	.800	Good
Level of Expectations	4	.866	Excellent
Work Experience	5	.924	Excellent
Job Scope	4	.894	Excellent
Unemployment Among Fresh Graduate	5	.845	Good

Table 1 presents the result of the reliability analysis. This analysis aimed to verify the validity and consistency of the instruments utilised in this investigation. Thus, all the questions were appropriate because Cronbach's Alpha was above 0.60.

### 4.3 Normality Analysis

Table 2: Normality Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Compensation	4.0783	.30359	.219	-.348
Level of Expectations	4.2424	.43413	.204	-.952
Work Experience	4.2829	.38734	-.168	-.521
Job Scope	4.2986	.36010	-.212	-.484
Unemployment Among Fresh Graduate	4.3166	.34548	-.174	-.532

Table 2 shows the values of Skewness and Kurtosis of compensation, levels of expectation, work experience, job scope, and unemployment among fresh graduates. According to the analysis result, the data for the independent and dependent variables was regularly distributed. It satisfies the values for Kurtosis and Skewness, as Hair et al. (2010) required. The required ranges for the Kurtosis and Skewness values are +3 to -3 and +1 to -1, respectively.

#### 4.4 Finding of Research Objective 1

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	Indicator
Compensation	.591**	.000	Moderate
Level of Expectations	.669**	.000	Strong
Work Experience	.612**	.000	Strong
Job Scope	.639**	.000	Strong

Table 3 displays the result of the correlation study conducted to determine the relationship between factors, which consist of compensation, level of expectations, work experience, and job scope, with the unemployment issue among fresh graduates. Therefore, all the factors that have a positive relationship with unemployment among fresh graduates with a degree of correlation are  $r = .591$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = .669$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = .612$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = .639$ ,  $p < 0.05$  respectively. Consequently, every hypothesis in this research is validated.

#### 4.5 Finding of Research Objective 2

Table 4: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.700 <sup>a</sup>	.489	.468	.65019

Table 4 depicts the model summary of the multiple regression analysis. The investigation aimed to provide an R square value of .489. The purpose of the R square's value is to account for the variation in the variables influencing unemployment among fresh graduates.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	Standard Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
Compensation	.072	.490	.625
Level of Expectations	.416	3.290	.001
Work Experience	-.005	.034	.973
Job Scope	.259	1.709	.091

R Square = .489

The multiple regression analysis that was done to determine which influential factor would affect unemployment among fresh graduates is presented in Table 5. If there is a change (increase) in the causes of unemployment, it is explained by the R square value. The factors will rise by 48.9% as a result. Conversely, a 48.9% decrease in the number of recent unemployed graduates will arise from reducing the factors influencing unemployment. It shows that the combined effect of all four variables accounts for 48.9% of the variation in unemployment among fresh graduates. The study conducted at the University College of Yayasan Pahang found that the level of expectations has the most significant impact on unemployment, with a value of  $\text{Beta} = .416$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

#### 4.6 Finding of Research Objective 3

Table 6: Frequency Analysis

Impacts of Prolonged Unemployment	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	109	72
Mental Health Issue	17	11
Physical Health Issue	10	7
Social Isolation	16	10
Total	152	100%

As seen from Table 6, poverty is the most chosen or the highest impact collected from all the questionnaires. Based on the result, poverty is the primary impact caused by the prolonged unemployment among fresh graduates of the University College of Yayasan Pahang, which accounts for 72%. Meanwhile, mental health at 11%, social isolation at 10% and physical health issues at 7%, respectively.

## 5. Conclusion

One of the biggest social concerns is usually the idea of unemployment. Unemployment is crucial since it impacts society's stability and economic growth. Employment shapes a society's character, future course, and how individuals describe themselves (Rayhan et al., 2020). Unemployment is a pressing issue affecting fresh graduates entering the job market. Level of expectation is the influential factor and correlates strongly with the unemployment of fresh graduates. Various factors, including societal norms, educational experiences, personal aspirations, and perceptions of the job market, influence the level of expectation among fresh graduates. Fresh graduates often enter the job market with high expectations, driven by their educational achievements and the desire for a rewarding career (Wirawan & Sentosa, 2021). They may expect competitive salaries, opportunities for career growth, challenging job responsibilities, a supportive work environment, and work-life balance. These expectations are shaped by their exposure to successful professionals, media representations of ideal careers, and societal emphasis on achievement and success.

All people, whether they work for themselves or employers, hope to have a decent job with reasonable compensation. However, hiring companies are still looking for the best candidates because many recent graduates are entering the market. For various social, familial, and personal reasons, recent graduates are expected to have high expectations for their future careers. Naturally, when there is a significant unemployment crisis, there is a tendency to predict where to find work, what to work on, and how to receive a good wage. Since they are expected to support their impoverished family, who educated them with the promise of a better future and expected that they will profit from their children in return, recent graduates must find employment with higher salaries.

However, the level of expectation has a positive relationship with the fresh graduate. It can be influenced and adjusted by the realities of the job market and personal experiences. Economic conditions, job availability, competition, and personal circumstances can impact graduates' expectations. Research indicates that prolonged unemployment experiences can lead to a reassessment of expectations among fresh graduates. The need for financial stability and job security often becomes a priority, causing graduates to adjust their expectations and consider opportunities that align with their immediate needs rather than their ideal career path. Thus, it is essential to note that the expectation concept can vary among individuals and is influenced by cultural, educational, and personal factors. Additionally, the concept is dynamic and can change over time as graduates gain experience, encounter new challenges, and re-evaluate their career goals.

On the other hand, the highest impact of prolonged unemployment on fresh graduates is poverty. Lack of money is one consequence of unemployment because recent graduates need a steady source of income. If they are unemployed, paying for basic needs like food, housing, and healthcare may be difficult. No fixed income can push them into poverty or worsen their financial situation if they already come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Poverty can restrict access to resources needed for an effective job search, such as internet access, transportation, professional attire, and networking opportunities (Oniore et al., 2015). These resources are necessary for fresh graduates to avoid difficulties finding suitable employment, prolonging their unemployment.

Many fresh graduates have student loans to repay, and with a job, it becomes easier to make the required monthly payments. The burden of student loan debt combined with unemployment can quickly lead to financial distress and increase the risk of falling into poverty. Student loan debt can create a significant financial burden for fresh graduates. The need to make monthly loan payments can pressure them to seek immediate employment, sometimes leading them to accept jobs that may not align with their long-term career goals. This urgency to repay loans can limit their flexibility in exploring job opportunities, potentially resulting in a higher unemployment rate. The need to allocate a portion of their income towards loan repayment limits the financial flexibility of fresh graduates. It may restrict their ability to invest in further education, attend training programs, relocate for job opportunities, or take low-paying entry-level positions that could provide valuable experience. This reduced flexibility can hinder their employment prospects and potentially contribute to a higher unemployment rate.

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