

THEMATIC ANALYSIS ON MALAYSIAN GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY IN POST COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had extensive repercussions on education systems, career trajectories, and employment opportunities, with profound implications for individuals, communities, and global economies. In this context, graduate employability has become a critical concern. Malaysia's distinctive socio-economic landscape presents a compelling setting for examining the challenges and opportunities faced by graduates seeking stable and meaningful employment in the post-pandemic period. This study employs a thematic analysis approach to examine the employability experiences of recent Malaysian graduates. Insights are drawn from a focused review of relevant literature and survey data capturing graduates' employment dynamics during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study empirically validates the key employment themes conceptualized through survey of graduates as respondents to strengthen the robustness of the findings. The findings indicate that Malaysian graduates encounter significant employability challenges in the post-COVID-19 labor market, driven by shifting employment structures and evolving skill requirements. The results highlight the critical importance of graduates' innovative career exploration, adaptability, and self-awareness of changing labor market trends as essential factors for improving employability outcomes. The study emphasizes the need for tailored employability strategies that reflect the specific socio-economic conditions of Malaysia. The findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, higher education institutions, and graduates in developing targeted interventions to enhance graduate employability in an evolving post-pandemic job market.

Keywords: Covid-19, employability, graduates, survey, thematic analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic, the employability landscape for Malaysian graduates has emerged as a critical concern, marked by significant challenges and untapped possibilities. Despite the nation's track record in producing a substantial number of graduates, the post-pandemic scenario introduces distinctive barriers that hinder their entry into the workforce. These obstacles are rooted in various interconnected factors, with the foremost being the economic upheaval triggered by the pandemic. This has led to widespread job losses, reduced hiring, and heightened competition in the job market, posing formidable challenges for graduates seeking employment amidst economic uncertainties.

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A central issue exacerbating employability concerns is the mismatch between graduates' skills and the requirements of employers. The shifting job landscape necessitates a re-evaluation of the skills, adaptability, and competencies crucial for post-pandemic employment. The pandemic has accelerated technological advancements, underscoring the importance of digital literacy and adaptability to tech-driven work environments. Graduates must adeptly navigate this transformation to enhance their employability. Youth unemployment, particularly among graduates, remains a significant concern in Malaysia, demanding urgent attention for the well-being of the younger generation and the nation's economic stability.

This study seeks to delve into the intricate challenges and potentials associated with the employability of Malaysian graduates post-COVID-19. By offering insights and recommendations, it aims to influence policies, educational strategies, and employment approaches, ultimately empowering graduates and contributing to the nation's economic recovery and advancement.

The unique contribution of this research lies in its focus on recent findings related to the pandemic's impact on graduates, an aspect often overlooked or based on outdated information and international contexts in previous studies. The outcomes of this research are poised to provide valuable insights for diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, investors, researchers, educators, and current graduates. Policymakers can tailor strategies to integrate fresh graduates into the workforce, investors can diversify portfolios to capitalize on opportunities enhancing employability amid pandemic challenges, and the study serves as a reference for researchers and educators, guiding their understanding of evolving trends. Given the dynamic nature of the job market influenced by economic shifts, the study's findings will empower graduates to navigate and adapt to changing dynamics effectively.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section commences with a literature review, highlighting significant findings from prior research. Its objective is to comprehensively examine the apparent evidence associated with the pandemic's influence on trends in Malaysian graduates' employability. This effort aims to provide a thorough foundation for subsequent sections of the study.

Given the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment, the primary focus for job seekers and career advancement is securing employment (Fossatti et al., 2023; Grosemans et al., 2023). An earlier finding by Wong and Beh (2024) also highlighted on the employment structural changes in Malaysia during and post-pandemic period. Graduates face diverse challenges in the job market, from intricate information to technological advancements, compounded by the pandemic's impact. Finding by Beh and Wong (2023) also underscores disparities in the quality of employment, wage gaps, and the vulnerability of workers in informal sectors due to the pandemic impact. Employability is not merely a trendy term; rather, it holds pivotal importance for students' education and future success (Eimer & Bohndick, 2023). Padhi and Sharma (2023) underscore that viable job opportunities play a crucial role in driving global economic growth. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically escalated unemployment rates across ASEAN countries (Jingyi et al., 2021).

Dang et al. (2023) observed a decline in the quality of employment during the pandemic, evident in layoffs, salary reductions, and job offer rejections. This downturn has particularly impacted vulnerable groups, including informal sector workers, gig laborers, and SMEs, jeopardizing their livelihoods due to lockdowns and limited social security coverage (Jingyi et al., 2021). Additionally, the transport and telecommunications sectors witnessed reduced benefits and wages during the pandemic's disruptions (Štálmachová, 2021). The evolving job market is significantly shaping the demands placed on higher education programs (Bennett et al., 2022). Liang et al. (2022) highlight workforce contraction as a key pandemic consequence in countries like China, disproportionately impacting the income of male graduates.

Rahman et al. (2022) discusses pervasive issues of underemployment and labor mismatch in Malaysia, driven by economic globalization, reduced skilled job opportunities, and technological

advancements replacing traditional jobs. Gender and performance in IT courses were identified as pivotal factors affecting bachelor students in the Philippines (Mezhoudi et al., 2021). Muhammad Asiff Rafani et al. (2021) observed widespread internship opportunities across Malaysia, facilitated by organizations preparing students for work. The digital divide, encompassing discrepancies in virtual network access, proficiency, and digital skills, is a significant concern (Männasoo et al., 2023). Peebles et al. (2023) express concerns about the negative impact of missed opportunities outside the operating room on sports medicine fellowship training due to COVID-19 disruptions. Collaborative efforts between universities and companies are deemed necessary to address undergraduates' employability challenges (Navío-Marco et al., 2023). The aviation industry faces challenges amid the pandemic, potentially altering career paths for Bachelor of Aviation students (Miani et al., 2021). Yiu et al. (2022) noted substantial job reductions in airlines during the pandemic, affecting the prospects of young aviation professionals. The shift to online learning amid the pandemic significantly impacted Bachelor and Master level students, influencing employability due to disrupted practical activities (Märgärint et al., 2023).

While the literature suggests the acquisition of new employment skills, experiencing career shocks can serve as a catalyst for personal and professional growth amid the inherent unpredictability they bring (Akkermans et al., 2020). In today's dynamic work landscape, recognizing and effectively responding to these shocks are crucial elements of career adaptability (Akkermans et al., 2020). Sato et al. (2021) underscored the significance of business-related hard skills, such as consumer psychology and marketing, in the sport business sector during and after the pandemic. Similarly, soft skills like collaboration and ethics were deemed essential in this industry due to its diverse stakeholders. In Saudi Arabia's IT job market, Mezhoudi et al. (2021) identified a strong emphasis on hard skills like development and soft skills, particularly in communication as noteworthy factors among employed students.

Additionally, accounting jobs prioritize technological skills alongside interpersonal abilities such as effective communication (Kwarteng & Mensah, 2022). Crismon et al. (2021) highlighted the challenges graduates encounter in post-pandemic job searches, noting the impact on job training and future educational plans. Ren et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of communicative and cultural competencies to navigate unexpected career shocks. Yiu et al. (2022) stressed the criticality of non-technical skills, such as communication, teamwork, and leadership, alongside technical expertise for job seekers in the post-pandemic era. Hong et al. (2023) highlighted preferences for blended learning for maintaining work/life balance but indicated a return to on-campus study due to cost-of-living concerns. Graduates with disabilities require further study to ensure better inclusion and empowerment in both academic and professional spheres (Moriña & Biagiotti, 2022).

Categorized under the umbrella of new job creation, Rahman et al.'s (2020) interviews highlighted the potential of online work environments, emphasizing a preference for interactive online classes, a sentiment supported by Fang et al. (2023). Notably, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, registered nurse (RN) licensure examinees in Taiwan underwent shifts in clinical practices, with 2022 graduates accruing more remote practice hours than previous cohorts. Online internships emerged as a significant predictor of success in licensure exams, providing additional reading periods and opportunities for discussion (Lai et al., 2023).

Matlhaba & Khunou (2022) underscored the positive impact of nurses' perceptions during the pandemic, fostering pride, responsibility, and confidence among graduate nurses. These experiences also exposed them to new crisis guidelines and critical patient care, enhancing their skill development and intrinsic motivation. Factors facilitating the transition from student to practice during the pandemic encompassed organizational, environmental, and individual aspects (Matlhaba & Khunou, 2022). Peebles et al. (2023) emphasized the benefits of industry-sponsored didactics for fellows in orthopaedic sports medicine, compensating for limited hands-on experiences in a remote setting.

Baruah & Biskupski-Mujanovic (2023) advocated for increased access for indigenous women in skilled natural resources employment, acknowledging the gender disparity in lower-skilled roles despite their higher education rates compared to indigenous men. Henadirage & Gunarathne (2023)

discussed how government funding pressures influenced remote teaching in accounting education in Sri Lanka, highlighting challenges in the transition from physical to virtual classrooms. Benvenuti et al. (2023) explored AI's role in enhancing creativity and computer programming skills, suggesting its integration into compulsory education to foster creative thinking. Zhang & Hanaoka (2023) emphasized region-specific approaches to decarbonizing the transport sector post-COVID, recognizing the need for tailored solutions due to diverse infrastructure, cultural norms, and economic conditions.

Ultimately, the literature explores the hurdles graduates encounter upon entering the job market. Wang et al. (2023) conducted research outlining career development for post-2000 university students, covering various themes. Hong et al. (2023) revealed that students' satisfaction with their majors is significantly predicted by self-efficacy, followed by perceived curriculum and campus support. Additionally, Kassa (2022) found that self-efficacy significantly influences the employability of business graduates. To meet employer demands for employability skills in project management graduates, group assessments have been incorporated into the curriculum, as reported by Tumpa et al. (2023). Moreover, Okolie (2022) highlighted the importance of work placement learning in predicting students' readiness for the transition to work, particularly mediated by self-efficacy and perceived employability.

Bolton-King (2022) suggested implementing additional mechanisms pre-graduation to enhance higher education students' employability. The introduction of interdisciplinary postgraduate programs positively impacts higher education, indicating preparation for future employment opportunities (Striolo et al., 2023). Mayyas and Alzoubi (2022) emphasized the need for training workshops to enhance graduates' writing skills and facilitate manuscript publication. Menon et al. (2012) discovered that graduates completing postgraduate studies have better employment prospects compared to those without postgraduate degrees. Hwa (2015) identified critical skills, highlighting a lack of self-management skills among graduates contributing to unemployment. Yiu et al. (2022) stressed the importance of equipping aviation students with soft skills for pandemic-resilient careers.

Regarding education levels, Mărgărint et al. (2023) and Galster et al. (2023) discussed the reliance of different graduate levels on various educational stages and the significance of identifying necessary soft skills for industry relevance. Karmaker et al. (2023) underscored the importance of Industry 5.0, emphasizing sustainability and inclusivity in supply chain operations. Furthermore, Herbert et al. (2020) addressed challenges in the higher education sector, emphasizing the impact of globalization on labor markets. Aviso et al. (2021) linked university attributes to graduate employability, while Chigbu & Nekhwevha (2022) highlighted the significance of competence in navigating labor market changes.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Thematic analysis is an iterative process, allowing researchers to refine and revisit themes throughout the analysis. This kind of analysis involves the process of systematically organizing qualitative data to uncover underlying themes and patterns. In this case, the goal is to capture the essence of the data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation, which is well-suited for exploring challenges and potentials. Thematic analysis is flexible and can be adapted to different research questions and data types, making it a widely employed approach in various disciplines, allowing researcher to gain insights into the experiences, perspectives, and meanings embedded in the data. In short, thematic analysis is an approach that can be used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. The following Figure indicated the flow of thematic analysis applies in this study following Braun and Clarke (2006) six phase framework:

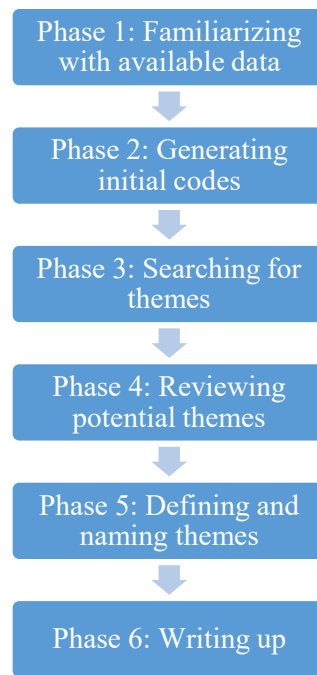


Fig. 1: Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework
Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

The initial phase involves immersing in the raw data gathered (consisting of past literatures, secondary sources, documents) to gain an overall understanding of its content and depth. Researchers typically read documents and make preliminary notes with analytic memos to capture initial observations, recurring ideas, and potential points of interest. This phase ensures that the researcher becomes intimately acquainted with the data before formal coding begins.

In the second phase, themes are systematically identified and labelled based on the meaningful features of the data that are relevant. Coding will then be conducted manually and applied across the entire dataset. The outcome of this phase is a comprehensive list of codes that represent key themes evident in the data.

The next phase involves examination of the generated codes and to organise them into relevant themes. Related codes are clustered together, and potential relationships between codes are explored. This phase moves the analysis beyond individual codes toward more interpretive categories that capture something important about the data.

The subsequent phase involves refining the preliminary themes that has been identified in Phase 2 and Phase 3 to ensure their coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness. Themes are reviewed at two levels: first, at the level of coded data extracts to assess whether they form a meaningful pattern; and second, at the entire dataset level to confirm that the themes accurately reflect the data as a whole. Themes may be merged, split, redefined, or discarded during this process, resulting in a more robust thematic structure.

The Phase 5 involves the review of each themes that has been identified in Phase 2 and interpreted in Phase 3 and refined in Phase 4. This phase involves establishing clearly defined themes by identifying the core essence of what each theme represents. Concise, informative names are assigned to each theme to convey their central organising concept and analytical significance.

The last phase involves integrating the themes into a coherent thematic framework that supports interpretation and reporting. The themes are then presented in a structured narrative, supported by literature sources to demonstrate analytical rigour and provide compelling findings.

To further strengthen the thematic analysis that was conducted based on past literature and secondary sources, survey is conducted to empirically validate the thematic analysis findings. The survey questionnaire was developed based on the thematic findings from the literature analysis. A non-probability purposive sampling approach was employed, targeting graduates from public and private

higher education institutions across Malaysia. The integration of qualitative themes with quantitative findings enabled triangulation, enhancing the robustness and interpretability of the results.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In compliance with the research emphasis, thematic analysis is flexible and adaptable to diverse data type, precisely here within the context of development economics, organizing the employment outlook for Malaysian graduates. Coherent within each theme, these descriptive labels aid in pinpointing employability trend challenges and potentials reflecting from the analysis's insights.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of Malaysian Graduates' Employability Trend Challenges
Employability Trend Challenges Encountered by Malaysian Graduates

Theme	Sub-theme
Complicated Job Market Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information Asymmetry and Lack of Transparency ● Rapidly Changing Job Requirements ● Fragmented Recruitment Platforms and Channels ● Mismatch between Job Advertisements and Actual Roles
Unstable Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental Health and Emotional Exhaustion ● Job Insecurity and Work Intensity ● Limited Organizational Support for Well-being
High Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oversupply of Graduates and Skilled Workers ● Intense Competition for High-Quality Employment ● Pressure for Multi-Skilling and Portfolio Careers ● Inequality in Access to Networks and Opportunities
Economic Uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Income Volatility and Wage Stagnation ● Business Closures and Hiring Freezes ● Rising Cost of Living and Financial Stress ● Short-Term Contracts and Precarious Employment
Global Issues Interference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geopolitical Tensions and Trade Disruptions ● Global Health Crises and Pandemic Aftershocks ● Supply Chain Disruptions and Industry Restructuring ● Dependence on Global Economic Conditions
Automation Constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job Displacement due to Automation and AI ● Skills Obsolescence and Technological Gaps ● Limited Reskilling and Transition Support

Source: Compiled by author

Based on Table 1, countless challenges may confront Malaysian graduates in the post-pandemic era. The job market presents complexities such as intricate job requirements, unclear job descriptions, labyrinthine job search platforms, and online job scams. Some job postings may demand qualifications that appear excessive for the actual position, causing confusion and potential overqualification.

Additionally, job titles displayed on search platforms may not accurately reflect roles and responsibilities, further complicating the job search. The presence of fake companies posing as legitimate employers adds another layer of difficulty in distinguishing genuine opportunities from scams.

Moreover, an unstable work-life balance is linked to existing pressures, inadequate time management, and low self-discipline. High expectations for well-paying jobs can intensify pressure on Malaysian graduates, while poor time management, stemming from a lack of clear planning or structure, results in inefficient workflows. Insufficient self-discipline, often due to distractions and weak self-regulation, contributes to an inconsistent daily routine.

However, high competition is influenced by limited job offers, a large pool of unemployed individuals, an influx of fresh candidates domestically and globally, and restricted salary ranges. Certain industries may have a limited number of job openings, and some may experience layoffs or downsizing, increasing the competition among unemployed candidates. Globalization and the prevalence of remote work mean that Malaysian graduates may compete with candidates worldwide, with employers potentially setting salary caps, making negotiations for higher pay challenging.

Economic uncertainty, a multifaceted issue, poses significant implications for individuals, businesses, and governments. This uncertainty includes commodities price inflation, investment anxiety, and devalued currency. Rising prices of essential commodities lead to higher living costs for Malaysian graduates, while increased financial market unpredictability causes anxiety about where to make proper investments. A devalued currency reduces its purchasing power compared to other currencies.

Furthermore, global issues such as inadequate waste management, food insecurity, and low safety awareness present additional challenges. Improper waste disposal and a lack of recycling efforts contribute to environmental degradation, including pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change. Food insecurity can lead to social unrest and economic instability, particularly in regions heavily dependent on agriculture. Neglecting safety measures can have public health consequences, especially in the context of pandemics.

Finally, automation constraints, including overwhelming industry jargon, limited certifications and qualifications, and fears of job loss, add to the challenges. Industry-specific language may create communication gaps, hindering effective collaboration for Malaysian graduates. The rapid advancement of automation technologies may outpace certifications and qualifications, leading to concerns about job displacement as routine, repetitive tasks become automated.

The findings from the thematic analysis is further strengthened with survey reported from the Malaysian graduates. Figure 2 showed the reporting of the survey conducted to review the challenges faced by graduates during the post-COVID period. Based on the reporting, some key findings that evidently to be aligned with the themes defined from the thematic analysis. First, the challenge of complicated job market information (Q1), which recorded the highest neutrality (42%), aligns closely with the theme *Complicated Job Market Information*. The existence of various online job platforms explained why many respondents neither strongly agreed nor disagreed. Rather than rejecting the challenge, graduates appear uncertain due to inconsistent job signals and unclear recruitment practices.

Secondly, the perceptions regarding work-life balance under flexible or remote work arrangements (Q2) correspond directly with the theme *Unstable Work-Life Balance*. While a substantial proportion of respondents strongly agreed that they could manage work-life balance, the presence of a large neutral group suggests uneven readiness. The finding suggested that not all graduates feel fully equipped to self-regulate in the new changing environments. This uncertainty may be linked to uneven digital readiness, home working conditions, or lack of organisational support.

Meanwhile, the challenge of high competition in the job market (Q3) is reinforced by the thematic theme of *High Competition*, which highlights limited job offers, crowds of unemployed individuals, an influx of fresh graduates, and salary constraints. The equal proportions of respondents strongly agreeing and remaining neutral suggests differentiated experiences among respondents.

Fourth, concerns regarding local economic conditions and employability risk (Q4) show the strongest consensus, with nearly three-quarters of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. The reporting was reflected well under the theme *Economic Uncertainty*. This reflects heightened macroeconomic awareness among graduates, likely influenced by post-pandemic recovery

uncertainties, inflationary pressures, and labour market restructuring. This finding appeared to strongly support the theme *economic uncertainty*.

Next, the global issues affecting job plans (Q5) correspond with the theme *Global Issues Interference*. The thematic emphasis on trade disruptions, pandemic aftershocks and high dependence on global economic conditions explains why respondents acknowledge global risks yet remain partially neutral. Graduates appear aware of global disruptions but uncertain about their direct employability implications, reflecting indirect but pervasive global vulnerability.

Finally, automation-related uncertainty (Q6) marked by the highest neutrality responds of 41% maps clearly onto the theme *Automation Constraint*. This reflected that graduates may acknowledge the inevitability of automation digitalization but remain unsure about their own adaptability and skill relevance. This uncertainty underscores the importance of reskilling, digital literacy, and institutional support in preparing graduates for technological transitions.

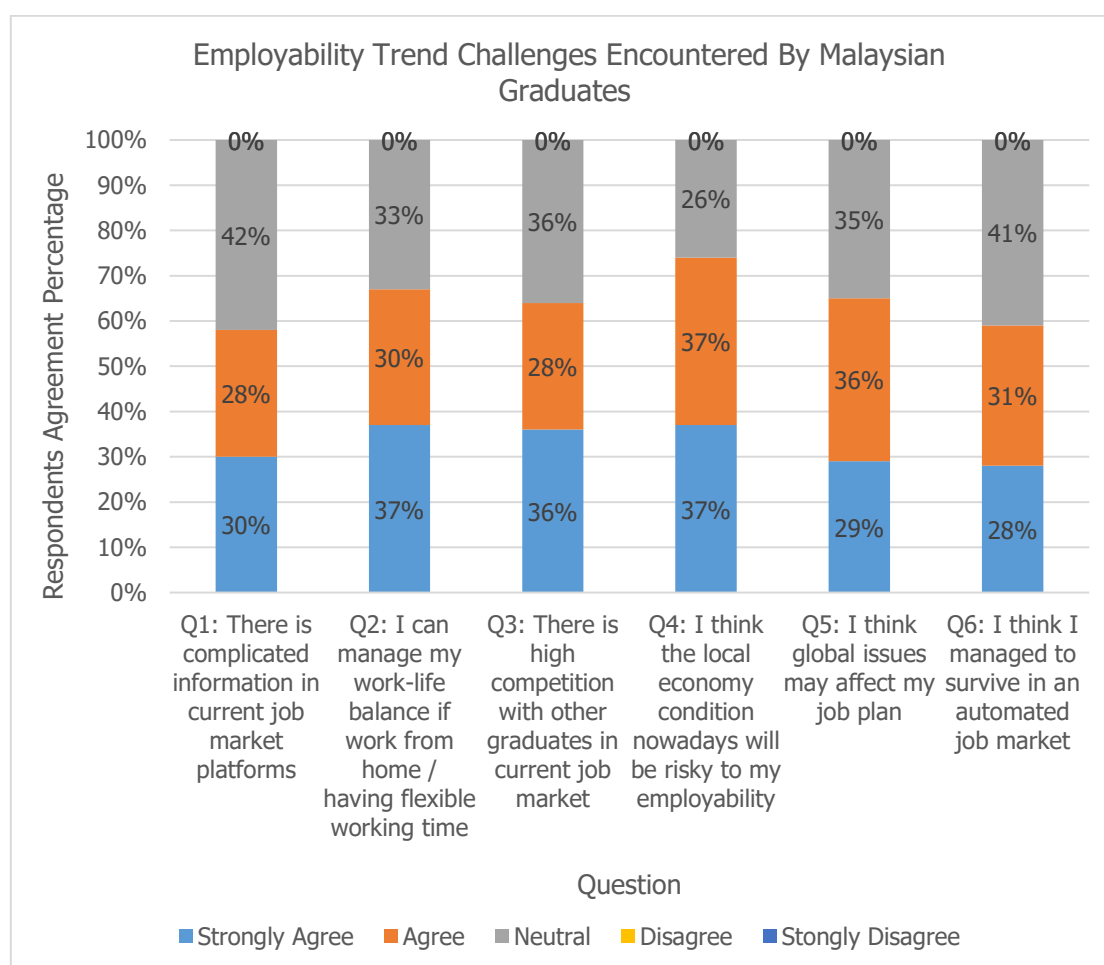


Fig. 2: Employability Trend Challenges Encountered by Malaysian Graduates

Table 2: Thematic Analysis of Malaysian Graduates' Employability Trend Challenges Potentials of Malaysian Graduates' Employability in Post Pandemic Era

Theme	Sub-theme
Technology advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digitalization and Automation ● Technology Accessibility
Innovation and Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research and Development (R&D)

	● Creative Industries and Knowledge Creation
Government Initiatives	● Policy Frameworks and Regulatory Support
	● Financial Incentives, Grants, and Subsidies
Lifelong Learning	● Continuous Professional Development and Upskilling
	● Digital and Technical Skills Training
Green Mobility	● Green Infrastructure Adoption
	● Environmental Awareness and Behavioural Change

Source: Compiled by author

Table 2 above indicates the potentials that Malaysian graduates might encounter in the job market. Primarily, advancements in technology can yield positive outcomes, such as streamlining job searches and implementing sophisticated automation. Malaysian graduates seeking employment can effortlessly upload resumes and apply to multiple positions with just a few clicks, reducing the administrative workload associated with job applications. Additionally, advanced automation diminishes the risk of human error, especially in tasks requiring repetitive actions or precision.

Moreover, innovation and creativity contribute significantly to research and development (R&D) and entrepreneurship. R&D plays a pivotal role in technological advancement, leading to the creation of new products, services, and processes that can revolutionize industries. When effectively utilized, Malaysian graduates can gain a competitive edge in both domestic and global markets. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in job creation, driving economic development by establishing and expanding new businesses. Graduates with innovative business ideas can benefit from organizations such as Yayasan Inovasi Malaysia (YIM), which facilitates networking events, Youth Asia offering various programs for young entrepreneurs, Magic Cyberjaya providing co-working spaces, Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) supporting digital entrepreneurship, and more. Taking calculated risks can lead to valuable learning experiences and personal growth.

Nevertheless, government initiatives are vital for guiding job searches and promoting entrepreneurship. Government programs offering job search guidance help Malaysian graduates find suitable employment more efficiently, often including training opportunities to develop skills aligned with market demands. Entrepreneurship guidance programs provide access to capital and support networking or mentorship, fostering the establishment of new businesses. Malaysian graduates can benefit from entrepreneurship policies and schemes like the National Entrepreneurship Policy (DKN) offering training for entrepreneurs, the SME Master Plan supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) growth, the Green Technology Financing Scheme (GTFS) promoting green entrepreneurship, and more.

Meanwhile, lifelong learning is crucial for personal and professional development, especially for Malaysian graduates who need to continuously acquire new skills and knowledge throughout their careers. Online learning opportunities and personal skill classes are integral in this regard. Numerous online platforms, such as Coursera, edX, Udemy, and LinkedIn Learning, offer a wide range of courses in a self-paced format. Local classes in art, cooking, and wellness also enable graduates to learn new skills or pursue personal interests.

Last but not least, green mobility is a crucial aspect of the modern job market, encompassing sustainable industries and eco-friendly practices. With the increasing adoption of electric vehicles (EV), graduates can explore opportunities in EV manufacturing, maintenance, charging infrastructure development, and EV-related software and technology. Opportunities also exist in sustainable agriculture, where graduates can promote eco-friendly farming practices, organic agriculture, and food sustainability. Embracing eco-friendly practices not only reflects positively on the image of organizations but also contributes to environmental benefits.

Next, Figure 3 indicated the survey reporting examined based on the questionnaire collected from Malaysian graduates during the post-COVID period. First, a strong majority of the graduates' respondents has agreed with keeping up with youth and societal trends (Q1). This finding was aligned

with the theme *Technology Advancement* and indicated the cultural adaptability and openness of graduates to evolving social norms, technologies, and lifestyles.

Second, the graduates' attitudes toward lifelong learning (Q2) received moderate support with relatively high neutrality responds. This corresponds with the theme Lifelong Learning derived from the thematic analysis finding. While graduates recognise the importance of continuous skill acquisition, this finding has clearly indicated that engagement often depends on access to online platforms and personal skill classes. The neutrality may therefore reflect practical constraints, highlighting a gap between intention and implementation.

Subsequently, strong support for environmentally friendly work practices (Q3) corresponds with the theme Green Mobility. Graduates' preference for sustainable industries and eco-friendly practices suggests their positive alignment with emerging green labour markets. This finding suggests that sustainability is not only an ethical concern but also an employability asset among younger cohorts. Next, perceptions of entrepreneurial and innovative capacity (Q4) reporting mixed result with dominant neutrality. This perception was consistent with the theme *Innovation and Creation*. The perception reveal that graduates recognise While many graduates recognize in their potential to create or innovate employment pathways, yet hesitation remains.

Lastly, working in a foreign country (Q5) with high disagreement being recorded amongst respondents. This finding contrasts with other potentials and suggests selective mobility preferences. Factors such as family ties, immigration barriers, cost of living, or national loyalty may have shaped these preferences.

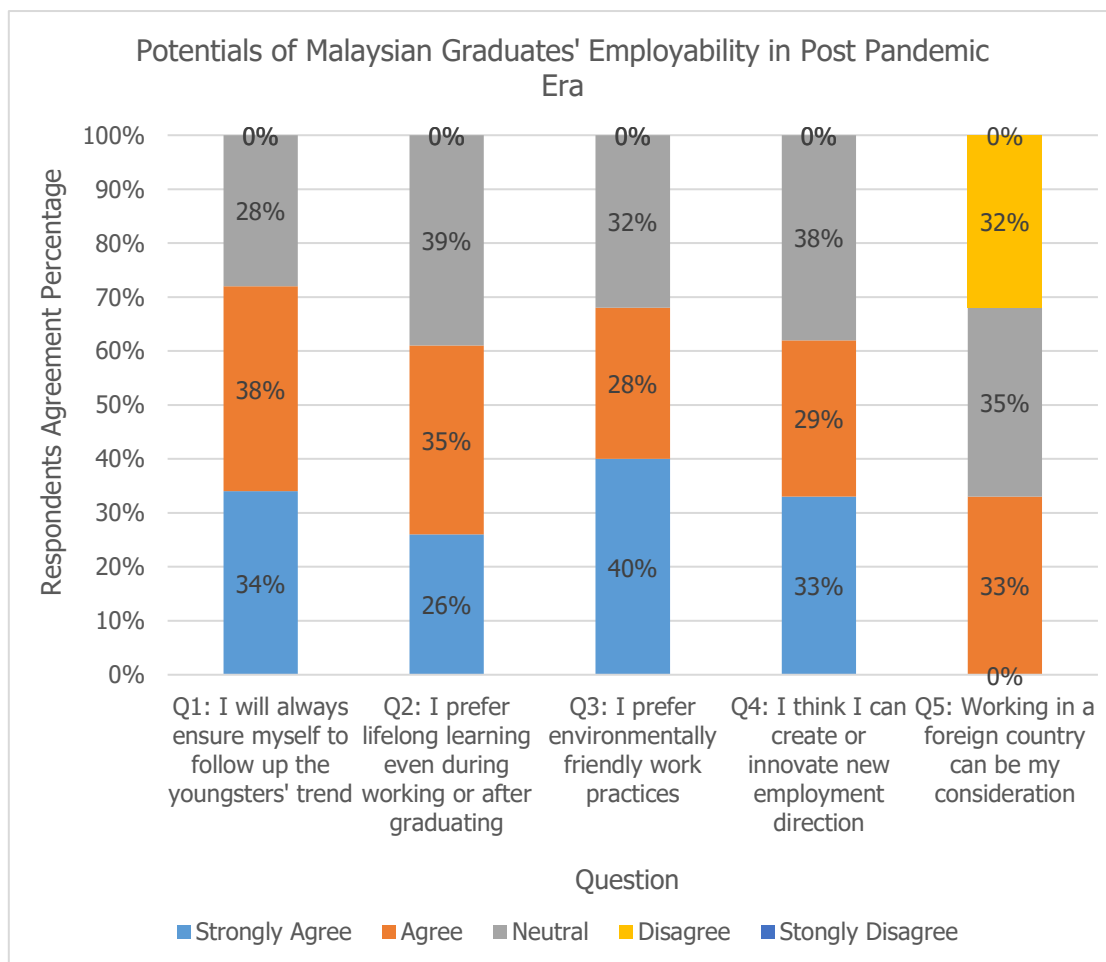


Fig. 3: Potentials of Malaysian Graduates' Employability in Post Pandemic Era

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the employability landscape for Malaysian graduates presents numerous challenges, encompassing complex job requirements, ambiguous job descriptions, intricate job search platforms, and the threat of online job frauds, collectively contributing to a complicated job market information scenario. This situation is compounded by existing pressures, a lack of time management, and low self-discipline, leading to an unstable work-life balance for graduates. Moreover, high competition arises from limited job offers, a large pool of unemployed individuals, a surge in fresh candidates from both domestic and global sources, and constrained salary ranges. Economic uncertainty, influenced by commodities price inflation, investment anxiety, and devalued currency, further underscores the need for graduates to navigate a complex professional landscape.

On the bright side, amidst these challenges, the study underscores the importance of understanding the potential avenues for Malaysian graduates in the post-pandemic era. Technological advancements offer convenience in job sorting and sophisticated automation, while innovation and creation remain integral to staying abreast of research and development (R&D) and entrepreneurial opportunities. Government initiatives are pivotal in guiding graduates through the job search process and fostering entrepreneurship. Lifelong learning emerges as a cornerstone for personal development, with online learning opportunities and personal skill classes offering avenues for continuous growth. Lastly, an emphasis on green mobility encourages graduates to engage with sustainable industries and eco-friendly practices, reflecting the evolving nature of the job market and the importance of environmental considerations in career prospects.

In light of the paper's limitations and potential applications, future studies with similar research objectives should consider broadening their data collection and analysis strategies concerning the employability trends of Malaysian graduates. This might entail the adoption of new methodologies or software tools to enhance the research process. Strengthening the methodology is crucial for significantly enhancing the credibility and accuracy of the data, yielding benefits not only for researchers but also for the broader scientific community, policymakers, and society at large. This commitment to refining the research approach contributes to the development of reliable and relevant knowledge.

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