

The Working Adult Intentions' to Pursue Lifelong Learning Education

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Abstract

Nowadays there are many opportunities for everyone to further full time or part-time studies. Education institutions such as universities, polytechnics and college communities offer a lot of programs and courses via online and offline. As for working adults, pursuing study for self-improvement, whilst others may require for expanding their profession or to stay competitive in their current career. Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) promotes lifelong learning education under these agencies where polytechnics and college communities to act as a provider for lifelong learning to working adults to pursue their study. Unfortunately, the enrolment of working adult still low due to several constraint such as time management, financial, families and lack of self-motivation in engaging student communities. Therefore, working adults need to consider various factors before they decide to further their study. This study aims to identify the factors that influence working adult's intention to pursue lifelong learning education from aspects of attitude, social norms and self-efficacy. The study was conducted using a quantitative approach which involved 306 respondents from private and government sectors in different companies and offices around Ipoh, Perak. Statistical analysis revealed that the social norms and self-efficacy are the most positive factors that influence the working adult intentions' in pursuing study.

Keywords: intention, attitude, social norms and self-efficacy

Abstrak

Kini terdapat banyak peluang bagi mereka yang mempunyai keinginan untuk menyambung pengajian secara sepenuh masa atau separuh masa. Institusi pendidikan seperti universiti, politeknik dan kolej komuniti menawarkan pelbagai program dan kursus berkaitan secara atas talian atau secara bersemuka. Bagi individu yang bekerja, ada yang menyambung pengajian bertujuan bagi meningkatkan pembangunan diri, ada juga untuk meningkatkan tahap kerjaya dan ada yang bertujuan agar sentiasa berdaya saing dalam kerjaya mereka. Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi (KPT) telah membudayakan pembelajaran sepanjang hayat (PSH) menerusi agensinya iaitu Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti yang merupakan penyedia PSH kepada mereka yang bekerja untuk menyambung pengajian. Namun begitu, kadar enrolmen individu yang bekerja untuk menyambung pengajian masih rendah disebabkan beberapa kekangan seperti masalah pengurusan masa, kewangan, keluarga dan kekurangan motivasi diri. Oleh sebab itu, individu yang bekerja perlu mempertimbangkan beberapa faktor sebelum mereka membuat keputusan untuk menyambung pengajian. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti faktor yang mempengaruhi keinginan individu bekerja menyambung pengajian dari aspek sikap, norma sosial dan keberkesanan diri. Kajian ini

dijalankan menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif yang melibatkan 306 responden dari individu yang bekerja di sektor kerajaan dan sektor swasta daripada pelbagai syarikat di Ipoh, Perak. Analisis statistik menunjukkan bahawa norma sosial dan keberkesanan diri merupakan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi keinginan individu bekerja untuk menyambung pengajian.

Kata kunci: keinginan, sikap, norma social, keberkesanan diri

1.0 Introduction

The transformation of the world economy over the past several decades has changed the community mindset about the importance of education in life. Basically, some people pursue lifelong learning because of self-improvement, whilst others may require expanding their career or to stay competitive in their current career. Regardless of the reason for pursuing lifelong learning, nowadays there are many opportunities for everyone to further full time or part-time studies.

Over the years, the Malaysia Ministry of Lifelong learning (MOHE) is extremely serious in expanding the education industry. To ensure the lifelong learning institution can cope with the market demand, the ministry is committed to providing diversity and education for all. Thus, MOHE promotes lifelong learning through polytechnics and college communities. These institutions commit to help working adults to upgrade skills and knowledge in a specialized field and boost their income level. Through the National Lifelong learning Strategic Plan (NHESP) 2007 -2020, polytechnics and college communities have played their roles as a lifelong learning hub by providing TVET education from certificate and diploma courses in various fields.

A Lifelong learning education is an opportunity to anyone from the preschool until post-retirement to learn through formal learning, a non-formal learning or informal learning activities. Therefore, Polytechnics and College Community have set up varying programs and courses such as Time Sector Privatization (TSP) and the Pembelajaran Sepanjang Hayat (PSH) programs to promote of continuing education and training among the community. In Malaysia, there are 36 polytechnics and 103 college communities that offer varying diploma and degree programs, and also the skills enhancement courses. For instance, at polytechnics there are part-time courses (over the weekend) and Time Sector Privatization (TSP) programs have been offered to private and government agencies, industry and public. Besides, if anyone interested in a short course program, there are also a list of PSH programs conducted by the college community as well. Thus, MOHE is seriously in empowering every level of society towards skills development, poverty reduction and economic prosperity.

Nevertheless, the data given by the Head of Training and Further Education Unit (ULPL) Ungku Omar Polytechnic (UOP) demonstrates that the enrolment of the part-time courses at a polytechnic is still low. Data shows that, there are low numbers of student had enrolled in any courses from 2011 until 2018 in most of the departments (refer Figure 1). This indicated that not all working adult have high interest to pursue lifelong learning. Although a greater earning potential is the most important push factor to pursue lifelong learning, there are still some barriers that keep working adults from pursuing lifelong learning such as self-problem, financial, work or family obligations.

Therefore, this study aims to determine the factors that influence working adult intention to pursue lifelong learning from the perspective of attitude, social norms and self-efficacy.

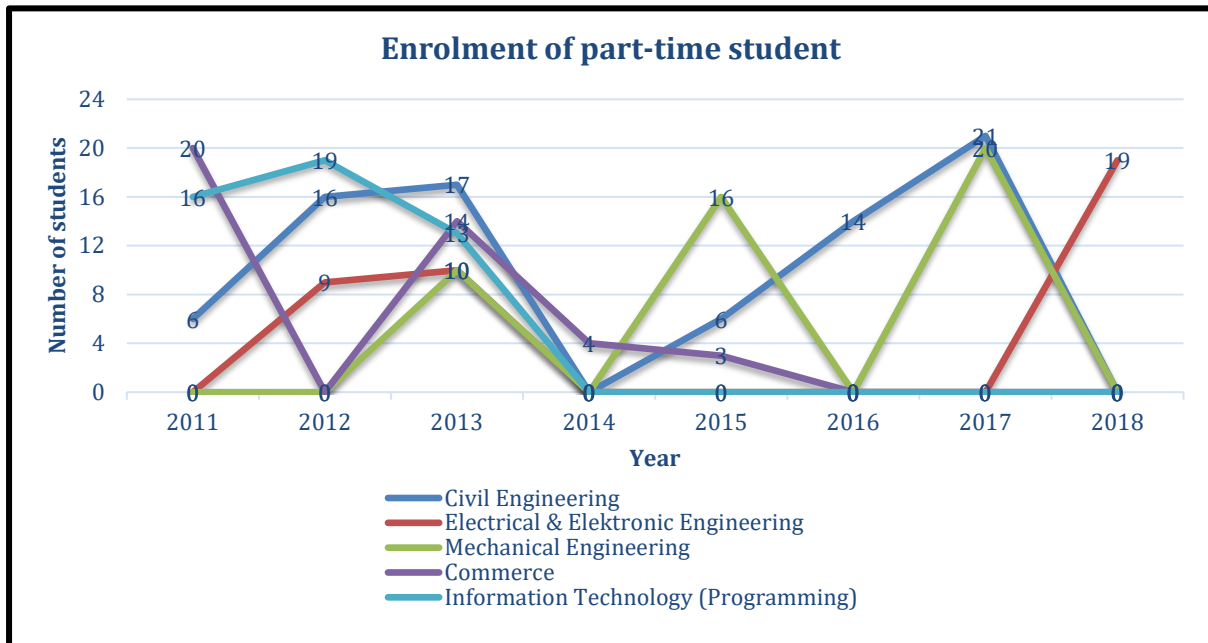


Figure 1: The rate of student enrolment

2.0 Literature review

Intention refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behaviour where the stronger the intention to perform the behavior, the more likely the behavior will be performed (Ajzen, 1991). One's intention depends on some other independent variables such as behaviour, social norms and perceived behaviour control. One of the well-known theory related to intention is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Icek Ajzen. According to this theory, three vital predictors that influence ones' intention which is, attitude, social norms and perceived behavioural control. Numerous studies have attempted to explain the intention (Ajzen, 2006). The theory explains well about one's intention to carry out something and the factors that affect their intentions. As a conclusion, a person's intention to do something is forced by other factors. Thus, to change the intention is to adjust the factors that motivate the intention.

Nonetheless, in this study, to predict the intention, a concept of self-efficacy by Bandura had been used instead of perceived behavioural control. Perceived behavioural control refers to whether a person perceives performing a particular behaviour as easy or difficult (Ajzen, 1991). While self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy affects an individual's choice of effort and persistence. So, a person with high self-efficacy are likely capable and ready to participate and expect they can establish a successful, whilst low self-efficacy means may avoid the activities. According to Mauer, Neergaard &

Linstad (2017), an individual's self-efficacy reflects the impact of past experiences on his or her assessment of capacity for performance attainment.

Attitude can be defined as an emotion or feeling that might affect an individual's choices and action toward something or the situation (Ajzen, 1991). An attitude can be evaluated from extremely negative to extremely positive. The attitude of a person is determined by psychological factors like ideas, values, beliefs, perception and so on. All of these factors have a complex role in determining a person's attitude. For example, there are some findings showed that attitude is essential and crucial for career development as it will give a direct influence for an individual either performing positively or negatively (Ismail, Sawang & Zolin, 2018; Razali, Talib, Manaf & Hassan, 2018). Normally, an individual's attitude will not the same with other people as attitude will affect by many factors such as background, culture, education and so on. Thus, from the aspect of Theory Planned Behaviour, attitude is holding an important role in a person's action. Furthermore, according to Veloo, Nor & Khalid (2015), individual that having a positive attitude towards certain things will be able to increase their achievements and ability to perform well within the matter that they need to conduct. Therefore, it seems like an individual should change its attitude to overcome the issue that he or she faced.

Social norms can be defined as an individual's perception of other people's outlooks and perspective on an intention or behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). For instance, social norms can influence individual thoughts and decision-making process whether to perform or not to perform a certain behaviour, such as pursuing studies. According to the Ajzen (1991), the social norm variable can contribute a mixed result when predicting the intention. This might be due to the certain intention or behaviour that might not be super significant with social norms. For instance, social norms are significant to the collectivistic country, like Malaysia. The significance of social norms variable varies for countries and cultures. Intention for working people to further studies may be significant and influenced by social norms as it is proven in majority of researches and studies and also it is proven to be related to intentions for a country like Malaysia that is collectivistic in nature.

Social norms are also referred to what an individual thinks of how someone close to them would think about and react to their particular intention or behaviour. Someone close to the individual can be their significant others, family and friends. Individuals are likely to act and carry out the proposed and suggested behaviour as expected by their partner, family and friends (Yean, Johari & Sukery, 2015). Social norms can be considered as a significant predictor of intention. The study indicates that respondents are concerned and affected by the opinion and beliefs of others and people surrounding them and that is important to them regarding the potential and intended behaviour.

Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 2010). For instance, sometimes people regularly overestimate their actual abilities. According to Bandura (1997), these beliefs could influence people effort in coping with demanding situations. However,

it was proven that overestimating one's actual capabilities, usually will affect positively on performance.

Beliefs is about whether one can produce certain actions is a strong predictor of behaviour. Furthermore, several behaviour theories converge on the hypothesis that attitudes, norms and self-efficacy are important determinants of intentions and behaviour. It is assumed that self-efficacy expectations will significantly increase the prediction of behavioural intentions. Besides, self-efficacy represents an individual's belief that they can accomplish a goal too. Therefore, without a strong sense of self-efficacy, an individual has little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 2002: 2). Self-efficacy serves as an excellent measure to which a person can have confidence in their ability to do something is directly related to their perceived control in executing that behaviour (Sheeran et al.,2016).

In conclusion, the attitudes, norms and self-efficacy have proven to give a huge impact on intention. The proposed framework can be referred to as below (Figure 2). Based on the literature reviews, the hypotheses were proposed:

- H¹ : There is a significant relationship between attitude and intention to pursue lifelong learning education
- H² : There is a significant relationship between social norms and intention to pursue lifelong learning education
- H³ : There is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and intention to pursue lifelong learning education

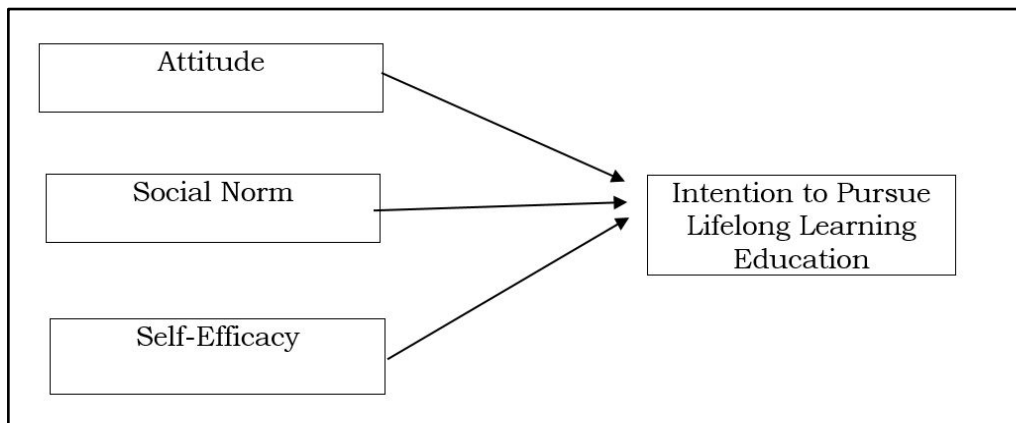


Figure 2: Framework of the study

3.0 Methodology

In this study, the population of the respondents were the employee of the private and government sectors in Ipoh, Perak. Questionnaires have been distributed to 306 employees (within 4 weeks) in private companies and government offices in Ipoh, Perak. A convenience sampling technique was conducted in this study. Convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling) is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study. In this study, the respondent is readily approachable to be a part of the sample. A consent letter was submitted to the top

management and employees before distribution the questionnaire to the respondents. At each organization, the purpose of the research was explained to the management and approval was obtained before the questionnaires were released to the employees. All responses were voluntary and anonymous.

Instrument measurement used in this study were adopted and generated from the available previous study (Table 3.1). The questionnaire consisted of 5 sections which are Section A, B, C, D and E. Section A is for the respondent's demographic profile which includes questions on gender, age, race, sector and industry of respondents. Section B, C, D and E were constructed using the 5 Likert Scale, ranging from "1-strongly disagree" to "5-strongly agree". The respondents need to respond based on the scale provided. While Section B consists of intention variable, Section C consists of social norms variable, Section D consists of self - efficacy variable and Section E consists of attitude variable.

Table 3.1: Sources of instrument measurement

Items	Sources
Attitude	Ajzen, I. (2002).
Social norms	Venkatesh, V. & Davis, F.D. (2000)
Self-efficacy	Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A. & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992).
Intention	Madden, T. J., Ellen, P. S. & Ajzen, I. (1992).

This study used Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 to analyse the result. To answer the research questions, the descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression were conducted.

4.0 Findings

The results are presented as the demographic analysis, reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha), descriptive analysis (mean) and inferential analysis (correlation and regression).

4.1 Demographic analysis

Table 4.1 demonstrates a summary of the frequency and percentage of demographic information. From the study, the demographic profile indicates that 148 respondents are male (48.4%), and the balance 158 respondents are female (51.6%). From 306 respondents, most respondent age is a range above 25 years old which means 166 respondent and equal to 54.2% have responded to the questionnaire in that range of age. For the range of 18 years old to 20 years old, there are 15 respondents which are equal to 4.9%. The remaining range of 125 respondents which are equal to 40.8% is the age of 21 to 25 years old. The table also showed the respondent race which the highest respondent race is Malay which consists of 267 respondents (87.3 %). This followed by Indian which consists of 22 respondents (7.2 %). The remaining is Chinese and Others which have 8 respondent (2.6%) and 9 respondents (2.9%).

Generally, most of the respondents are from the government sector that is 286 respondents (93.5%). Only 6.5% is from the private sector, 20 respondents. Government sectors are from armed forces and private sectors are from banking and teachers or lecturers. The highest frequency from armed forces with a total of 143 respondents (46.7%), followed by other industries, 142 respondents (46.4%). Besides, teaching and banking which are 17 and 4 respondents that equal to 5.6% and 1.3% respectively.

From the study, it was found that most people are interested in Business Studies (Management) which consist of 107 respondents (35%) and followed by Accountancy with a total of 47 respondents (15.4%). Then, followed by 34 respondents, that is 11.1% are interested in Information Technology (Programming). Furthermore, Architecture courses have 31 respondents which are interested in that equals to 10.1%. For Electrical and Electronic Engineering, 28 respondents are interested in that is 9.2%. Followed by Civil Engineering which has 26 respondents equal to 8.5%. Mechanical Engineering and Electronic Engineering (Communication) has 22 and 11 respondents, 7.2% and 3.6% respectively. Finally, it was found that majority of the respondents which are 192 respondents (62.7%) have indicated that they are interested in the part-time course and 114 respondents (37.3%) are interested in time sector privatization (TSP) course.

Table 4.1: Summary of frequency and percentage of demographic information (PART A)

Demographic		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	48.4
	Female	158	51.6
Age	18-20 years old	15	4.9
	21-25 years old	125	40.8
	Others	166	54.2
Race	Malay	267	87.3
	Chinese	8	2.6
	Indian	22	7.2
	Others	9	2.9
Sector	Private	20	6.5
	Government	286	93.5
Industry	Banking	4	1.3
	Armed Forces	143	46.7
	Teacher/Lecturer	17	5.6
	Others	142	46.4
Courses interested	Accountancy	47	15.4

	Business Studies	107	35.0
	Civil Engineering	26	8.5
	Architecture	31	10.1
	Electrical	28	9.2
	Engineering	11	3.6
	Electronic		
	Engineering	22	7.2
	(Communication)		
	Mechanical	34	11.1
	Engineering		
	Information		
	Technology		
Types of course interested	(Programming)	192	62.7
	Part-time TSP	114	37.3

4.2 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis is the stability and consistency that data gained by Cronbach's Alpha. A construct is considered reliable when its reliability score is greater than 0.7 (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2013). Refer to table 4.2, the data finding shows the Cronbach's Alpha for each variable is more than 0.9. This indicated that the strength of association of this variable is excellent and all questions were acceptable.

4.3 Data analysis

Table 4.2 shows the mean value and standard deviation for all the variables in this study, which are social norms, self-efficacy, attitude and intention. The means for attitude (M=3.6686, SD=0.89362) found to be the highest, then followed by social norms (M=3.2595, SD=0.93975) and self-efficacy (M=3.2588, SD=0.84088). While the lowest mean is the intention (M=2.9928, SD=0.85994).

Table 4.2 also shows the value of the correlation between the social norms, self-efficacy, attitudes and intention. A Pearson correlation was used to identify the significant relationship among each of the variable. The results show that social norms and intention has a strong relationship with the value $\beta=0.635$. There is a significant positive correlation between social norms and intention since the significant level is $p<0.001$. According to Malhotra (2010), $\beta=0.635$ correlation has a strong positive relationship.

In the other hand, the self-efficacy and intention have a moderate relationship with the value of correlation is $\beta=0.591$. The significant level is $p<0.001$ proven that there is a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and intention. Last but not least, there is also a positive relationship between attitude and intention is $\beta=0.488$. The significant level is $p<0.001$ proven that there is a significant moderate positive correlation between attitude and intention. Overall, the hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 were accepted.

Table 4.2: The mean, standard deviation, cronbach alpha and correlation between the variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's alpha	Pearson Correlation			
				1	2	3	4
1. Intention	2.9928	0.85994	0.932	1			
2. Social Norms	3.2595	0.93975	0.940	.635**	1		
3. Self-Efficacy	3.2588	0.84088	0.946	.591**	.595**	1	
4. Attitude	3.6686	0.89362	0.940	.488**	.577**	.741**	1

Multiple linear regression was calculated to analyze factors that affected working adult intentions' to pursue lifelong learning education. It is based on attitude, social norms and self-efficacy. The multiple regression showed only social norms and self-efficacy is significantly related to the intention to pursue lifelong learning education. The findings indicate that the most important factor to predict the intention to pursue lifelong learning education is the social norms ($\beta=0.406$, $p<0.001$) and the self-efficacy ($\beta=0.352$, $p<0.001$). It means that only social norms and self-efficacy are the best predictors for intention. In the other hand, it was found that the attitude is not significantly related to intention to pursue lifelong learning education. All factors support explains $R=.689$ of the variance of the intention. The $R^2 = 47\%$ of the intention is mainly due to all factors and 53% indicates other factors. Table 4.3 presents the results of the multiple regression.

Table 4.3 Regression result

Variable	β	t-value	p-value
Constant	0.603	3.721	.000**
Attitude	-.022	-.362	.718
Social Norms	0.406	8.279	.000**
Self-Efficacy	.352	5.274	.000**

Notes: Significance at: ** $p<0.001$, $R^2 = 0.47$, adjusted $R^2=0.469$; dependent variable: intention to pursue lifelong learning education

5.0 Discussion

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between the attitude, social norms, self-efficacy and the working adults' intention to pursue lifelong learning education. Besides, the study also examines the most important key factors that influence the intention to pursue studying. Overall, the result shows that all hypotheses were accepted (H^1 , H^2 and H^3). There is a positive significant relationship between the attitude, social norms, self-efficacy and the working adults' intention to pursue lifelong learning education. Nonetheless, although all variables have a significant positive

relationship, the regression analysis shows that only social norms and self-efficacy could influence the intention.

In this study, it is revealed that social norms play an important role in the choice behaviour of the respondent. The study is consistent with the previous studies by Asimakopoulos, Hernández, & Peña (2019) and Wach, & Wojciechowski (2016) on how the behaviour can affect their action. It is also in line with Ismail et al. (2018) study, which most people are influenced by the opinions of other people around them such as their partners, friends, parents, siblings and relatives. In this case, when the people close to them think that they should further their study, it is almost certain that their intention will increase significantly too. The intention and the decision-making process might also be affected by these people. Therefore, Polytechnic needs to educate not only the potential student but also the people that are close to them like family, spouse and friends. They might encourage potential students to come and enrol the courses.

In the other hand, self-efficacy is also found as a significant strong sense of intention. This research is in line with Utamin (2017) and Sariah et al., (2018) which shows that self-efficacy is a direct and positive effect on the intention. The findings further reinforce an element of Bandura Social Learning Theory which indicate that an individual's intention and behaviour are significantly influenced by the belief of his/her ability to perform this specific task effectively. Thus, the self-efficacy variable is significant to the intention of the students to enrol in part-time courses.

5.2 Conclusion and recommendations

This study attempt to contribute to the theory and knowledge and also its contribution to practice. The study has increased the understanding of how the social norms and self-efficacy are important thus could influence someone decision making in pursuing studies. Also, the use of self-efficacy as a replacement of perceived behavioural control to predict the intention is confirmed. The findings support the previous studies by Sheeran et al., (2016) that indicate that self-efficacy is consistently the strongest predictor of intentions.

The findings of the study draw useful implications for the top management and ULPL at the polytechnic. For instance, the management should organize more campaign to promote the part-time courses to the parents and community. Polytechnic could open small booths at the shopping malls over the weekend to educate the public on the courses that are being offered. The lack of information gathered by the parents and community might affect the decision to pursue their study. Besides, the study also demonstrates that working adults around Ipoh have the intention to further their study in part-time courses offered by polytechnic. Therefore, it is also suggested that polytechnic should use social media to promote their courses, as online marketing tools are less expensive and also a faster approach to doing promotion and marketing.

There are some limitations to be addressed in the study. First, the study is conducted in Ipoh, Perak and a specific cultural context. Application the same model in a different place could yield varying results. Second, the study examines a direct relationship between the independent variables and

dependent variable, without any control variable and the moderating/mediating effects. Thus, future study is recommended to explore the moderating/mediating effects using the structural equation model.

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