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THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL CAREER MANAGEMENT: COMPARING THE ACADEMIC STAFF' PERCEPTION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EMPLOYABILITY IN DETERMINING SUCCESS IN ACADEMIA

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to investigate the organisation's roles in career management. It further explores the mediating effects of perceived internal and external employability to deepen the understanding of whether academics who experienced organisational learning practices are more likely to pursue their career within the institution or across the external labour market. Data from 288 academics in Malaysian universities were collected and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results revealed the significant impacts of organisational learning practices on career success. Furthermore, both internal and external perceived employability mediated the relationship between organisational learning practices and career success. Also, perceived external employability having a more substantial direct and mediating effect on academics' career success. This study uncovers that Malaysian academic staff depend upon external employment opportunities to pursue success in academia. Implications of the findings are discussed, along with the study's limitations and future research directions.

Keywords: Organisational Career Management, Organisational Learning Practices, Perceived Internal Employability, Perceived External Employability, Career Success



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INTRODUCTION

A review of studies on higher education management reveals that the excellence of higher education institutions (HEIs) is highly dependent on the qualifications, knowledge, and competencies of their academic community (Gandy et al., 2018; Khalid, 2019; Zacher et al., 2019). Academics' expertise and performance (in teaching and research) directly contribute to an institution's success in terms of ranking, scholarly output, and the satisfaction of stakeholders' expectations (Cheng et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2019; Zacher et al., 2019). As such, it is crucial for HEIs to acquire and develop their human capital to deliver quality performance in teaching and research, since the presence of qualified and experienced academic staff could be a major selling point to student applicants (Bossu et al., 2019; Tee et al., 2019; Van den Brink et al., 2013). Therefore, effective people management that prioritises career development and growth as well as the retention of academic talent is essential for the success of HEIs.

However, it is widely agreed that most academics struggle to find congruence between academic professionalism and modern academic work realities (Ahmad et al., 2017; Bryne et al., 2013). They are frustrated in balancing the institution demands in teaching and administrative work, with the need for academics to manage and develop their career profile via research and publication, paper presentation and professional development under the condition of resource constraints. Besides, many academics were often overloaded with teaching-related demands and no time left to establish their research profile (Gandy et al., 2018). Even though many academics perceive teaching as a time-consuming activity, establishing a research and publication profile is the main indicator for career progression. Some researchers suggested that career support and developmental opportunities from universities are the most commonly practised strategies to facilitate academics' career progression and success to manage the differences of expectations between academics and institutions (Abu Said et al., 2015; Gandy et al., 2018; Zacher et al., 2019).

Although career self-management is prevalent in the new career context, there are increasing calls to renew the roles of organisation in career management (Clarke, 2013; De Vos & Cambre', 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007; Soares & Mosquera, 2021). Moreover, academic work takes places in a knowledge-intensive environment, where systematic and extensive learning and development programmes are required to enhance the academics' job competencies and professionalism in dealing with their career development (Khalid, 2019). This lengthy and systematic career development plan is only available and can be conducted in HEIs with the power, resources, and information (Krishnan & Maheswari, 2011; Singh, 2018). Yet, there is a debate on the employability paradox (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011) that employee development might increase employees' perceptions of employment opportunities in the internal and/or external labour market. High competence workers, especially, are highly attractive to external employers and may increase their turnover intention and reduce their commitment. For these reasons, some employers might be reluctant to invest in staff's employability development. The debate between developing and retaining employees has indeed been a focal point of employability research over the decades (Akkermans et al., 2019; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Rodrigues et al., 2019).

Surprisingly, empirical research on the employability paradox has been limited to the scope of the link between perceived external employability and employee retention or turnover (De Cuyper et al., 2011; Nelissen et al., 2017), but has overlooked the impact of employee development practices on perceived internal employability, wherein the latter may lead to the perception of career success within the organisation and subsequently, organisational attachment. Therefore, it is crucial for the organisations to familiar with the complexity of employability to secure employee retention. To achieve this, the researcher should critically distinguish and evaluate various employability forms (i.e., internal and external employability) rather than only investigate the broad range (or single construct) of employability (Van Harten et al., 2017).

Therefore, the present study built on and resolved the concerns on the employability paradox by discussing the impacts of organisational learning practices on perceived internal and external employability. Specifically, the researcher addressed the key tenets of the employability paradox by comparing the impacts of organisational



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learning practices on perceived internal and external employability, and further tested the mediating effects of perceived internal and external employability on the relationship between organisational learning practices and career success.

Thus, this study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) Is there a relationship between organisational learning practices and academic staff's career success?
- 2) Is there a relationship between organisational learning practices and academic staff's perceived employability? Particularly, to what extent do organisational learning practices influence perceived internal employability in comparison with perceived external employability?
- 3) Do both perceived internal employability and perceived external employability mediate the relationship between protean career attitudes and academic staff's career success?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career Success Predictors

Career success is defined as "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes along a person's work experiences" (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179). Career success has been a focal research topic in the management and organisational behaviour field in recent years (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015), and the notion of career success has been increased relevance in the new career context with dramatic changes in the employment relationship. Consequently, a growing body of research focused on career resources such as human capital resources, motivational career resources and environmental career resources as the key resources in attaining career success (Hirschi et al., 2018; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Among these authors, the researchers adopted Hirschi et al.'s (2018) career resources framework as the theoretical foundation for this study and proposed the following predictors to predict the academics' career success: organisational learning practices (human capital and environmental resources) and perceived internal and external employability (motivational career resources).

Organisational Learning Practices and Career Success

Considering a contemporary view of a career as flexible and individualised, organisational career management (OCM) is conceptualised as the range of activities undertaken by the organisation to support an individual's professional and career development, in contrast with the traditional career planning that emphasises formal hierarchical progression (De Vos & Cambré, 2017). Research and practice have continued to place OCM as the main strategy to feeding the "talent pipeline" under the human resources function (Crowley-Henry et al., 2018; De Vos & Cambré, 2017). Although organisations tend to offer OCM practices in combination, there is no "general accepted typology of OCM practices" (De Vos et al., 2008, p. 162). Accordingly, the present study uses organisational learning practices to represent OCM (Watkins & Marsick, 1997, 2003). Organisational learning has been postulated as part of employees' daily activities supported by the organisation, to enhance the employees' knowledge, skills and ability, which in turn, impact their performance (Crouse et al., 2011; Kumar, 2019).

Concerning human resources development practices, organisational learning practices are vital for the optimal functioning of talented people such as academics (Kumar, 2019; Ulrich et al., 2017). Having talented human capital is critical, but the developmental supports from the organisations are equally important to harness the capabilities of the talents to realise the opportunities (Wilhelm & Hirschi, 2019). Thus, organisational learning practices, parallel with past studies, which are considered one of the key predictors on academics' career success in this study. Furthermore, voluminous contemporary studies (Akkermans et al., 2019; Leiber, 2019; Singh, 2018; Tee & Chan, 2016) testified to the correlation between organisational learning practices and career success and concluded that organisational learning and developmental programmes showed a positive relationship with career



success. Academics who experienced organisational learning practices at work demonstrated higher intrinsic as well as extrinsic career success. Therefore, the researchers hypothesise that:

H1: There is a positive relationship between organisational learning practices and academics' career success.

Organisational Learning Practices and Perceived Employability

Technological developments in today workplace accelerate skills obsolescence of many professions (Di Fabio & Cumbo, 2017). Many employees may not be fully convinced of their employability levels due to the fear of skill obsolescence and doubt whether their current skills and knowledge are sufficient to match the need of the labour market (De Grip & Van Loo, 2002; Kim et al., 2019). Accordingly, organisational learning practices can compensate for the lack of confidence among the employees to remain employable and the erosion of job security in the workplace (De Cuyper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2019; Van der Heijden et al., 2015). Thus, organisational learning practices are regarded as a managerial intervention to boost the individuals' career competencies, another major predictor of perceived employability.

Regarding the present study, the academic position is always termed as a job with a high learning value, where a diverse array of continuous developmental interventions is required to ensure the professionalism of the staff and institutions. In essence, organisational learning practices offered by the institutions organised by the academic institutions enhanced the academics' career-related self-efficacy, specifically in research and publication, teaching and administration skills, which can be viewed as a means of enhancing employability. For instance, several studies testified to the correlation between organisational learning practices and perceived employability and concluded that organisational learning practices appeared to be the solid contributors to academic staff's perceived employability (Tee & Chan, 2016; Van der Klink et al., 2014). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that organisational learning practices are positively related to academics' perceived employability.

Numerous past studies suggest the positive association of organisational learning practices and perceived employability, but it remains ambiguous if these employees are provided with sufficient learning and development opportunities; they see more internal career opportunities (e.g., internal employability) or finding new employment with other employers (e.g., external employability). Drawing on the signalling (Spence, 1973) and social exchange theories (Cropanzano et al., 2017), training and development practices from the organisation may be considered signals that the employer values about their employees, which in return, elicit a norm of reciprocity as higher levels of commitment and retention (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2019). If employees see more career developmental opportunity, they are willing to stay with their current employers (Cerdin et al., 2020). While internal employability is beneficial for both employees and organisations, there is a debate that organisation learning practices might trigger employees' perceptions of external employability, resulting in a higher turnover intention (Nelissen et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2019). Thus, the employers might face the dilemma of the benefits and the risks associated with employee (employability) development, known as employability paradox (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

Perhaps, the focus in employability paradox is mostly on perceived (external) employability as a single construct, affecting employee retention or turnover but overlooking the impact on perceived internal employability, which might increase employees' attachment and commitment (Baranchenko et al., 2020). There remains a paucity of research on the distinctions between perceived internal employability and external employability. This study addresses the notion of the employability paradox by exploring various forms of employability: internal and external employability. This study provides insight into how organisational learning practices most likely benefit academics and PHEIs by enhancing their (internal and external) employability perceptions (Lim et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2016). Thus, the researchers assume that organisational learning practices are positively associated with perceived internal employability and perceived external employability. Specifically, organisational learning



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practices may have a greater impact on perceived internal employability than perceived external employability. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between organisational learning practices and (a) perceived internal employability and (b) perceived external employability. Specifically, organisational learning practices have greater impact on perceived internal employability than perceived external employability.

The Mediating Roles of Perceived Employability

Emerging new career patterns and the gradual erosion of job security have led to increased employability as the basic indicator for contemporary career success. Employability is commonly understood as an individual's ability to get a job, retain a job, and move across different jobs or industries (Forrier et al., 2015; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Ergo, employability reflects a unique resource and capability that enhanced individual value in the labour market, positively associated with career successes. Several recent studies have found a positive correlation between perceived employability and career success (Akkermans et al., 2019; Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 2015; Niu et al., 2019; Verbruggen et al., 2015). However, the research conveying how organisational learning practices influence career success via perceived internal and external employability remains under-studied. This study includes perceived internal and external employability as a mediating mechanism along the direct paths to provide insights into the predictive values of organisational learning practices. Other than testifying the direct impacts of organisational learning practices on career success, the researcher further examines the mediating effects and compares the mediation weights of perceived internal employability and perceived external employability. A different level of direct and mediating effects on career success is produced since perceived internal employability and perceived external employability differed in focus and scope. These are the significant research gaps to be filled in this study.

To date, empirical research examining the impact of organisational learning practices on career success via perceived employability observed a positive association between organisational learning practices and career success, as well as a significant mediating effect of perceived employability (Akkermans et al., 2019; Tee & Chan, 2016). Building on these theoretical predictions, the researchers assume that perceived internal employability and perceived external employability might mediate the relationship between organisational learning practices and career success. Accordingly, the researchers hypothesise that:

- H3:** Perceived internal employability mediates the relationship between organisational learning practices and academics' career success.
- H4:** Perceived external employability mediates the relationship between organisational learning practices and academics' career success.

Development of Conceptual Framework

In the present study, organisational learning practices, perceived internal employability and perceived external employability are assumed as the key predictors for academics' career success. Career success, inclusive of objective and subjective measures, serves as the dependent variable. Organisational learning practices aim to enhance individuals perceived internal employability than perceived external employability in guiding their career path and success within the current organisation. Perceived employability, as another influential factor of career success in line with the modern career context, was partitioned into perceived internal employability and perceived external employability, which is included as mediators for academics' career success.



The conceptual framework is then developed and shown in Figure 1.

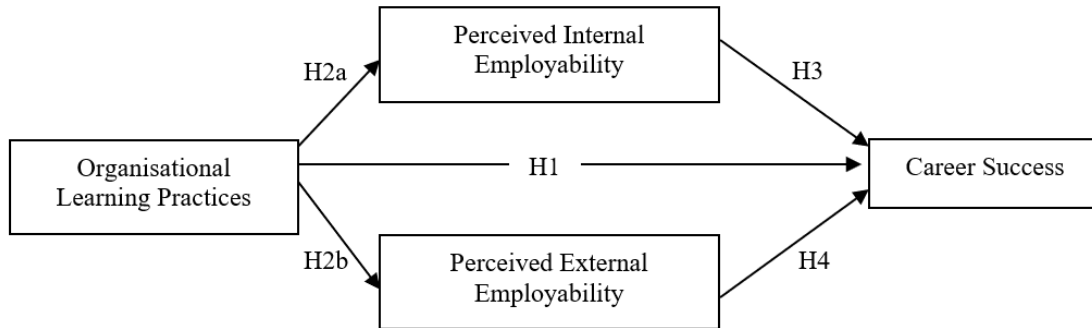


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODS

Research Design

In this study, survey research was conducted quantitatively using questionnaires for academic staff to test and verify the career success model. Quantitative survey approach relies on larger sample size and follows clear guidelines and objectives, enabling the results to be generalised (Zilkund et al., 2019)

Population and Sampling

The population for the present study was the academic staffs from private higher education institutions (PHEIs). Quota sampling was employed to create quota based on the academic staff's highest qualification level and divided the sampling units into three subgroups: (1) Bachelor's degree, (2) Master's degree, and (3) Doctoral degree. Simple random sampling was then performed to draw subsamples within each subgroup to ensure that the sample accurately represented the population while the researchers were able to detect the effects of phenomenon more accurately and make conclusive inferences from the sample statistics about the population.

In addition, 600 questionnaires were distributed by hand based on the suggestion by Memon et al. (2020). 288 responses were received (48% response rate). The sample comprised 159 (55.2%) men and 129 (44.8%) women, who were aged 30-40 years (49.3%), 41-50 years (25.7%), 51 years and above (13.9%), and the rest are below 30 years (11.1%). More than half of the respondents (58.7%) held a master's degree, while 24% held a doctorate, and 17.3% held a bachelor's degree. Moreover, 32.6% had worked with their university for 3-5 years, 30.6% were with theirs for 6-9 years, 25.7% had worked with their university for less than 2 years, and 11.1% had worked for more than 10 years in their university.

The study was cross-sectional, with the data being collected over a three-month period, from Jan-Mar 2020. We used quota sampling based on academic staff qualification. In 2019, 30% of Malaysian academics held a doctoral degree, 54% a master's degree, and 16% a bachelor's degree or equivalent (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2020). Our proportions were 24%, 59%, and 17%, respectively, indicating a slight under-representation of academics holding a doctorate and a slight over-representation of those holding a master's degree.

Instruments

A self-administered, hand-distributed questionnaire was employed to collect respondents' answers on the research topic. Four latent constructs were proposed and the relationships among them were tested to answer the



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research questions. The measurement items for these constructs were mainly adapted from previous tested and validated scales in the extant literature on career studies, employability, and organisational learning.

Organisational learning practices was measured using Yang et al.'s (2004) Dimensions of Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ). The DLOQ consists of seven dimensions with 21 items measuring the learning culture and practices on: (1) continuous learning (2) dialogue and inquiry, (3) team learning, (4) empowerment, (5) embedded system, (6) system connection, and (7) strategic leadership to encourage learning. Perceived employability was measured with the 11 items Self-Perceived Employability Scale (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Seven items were used to assess external employability and four items were used to assess internal employability. Academics' career success was measured with a mix of objective and subjective criteria. Six items (two objective and four subjective) were adapted and modified from past studies. Two objective success criteria were research productivity and salary, whereas the four subjective criteria were life satisfaction, contribution, freedom, and job satisfaction. Respondents were asked to rate their perception on the four latent constructs using a Five-point Likert scale ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '5 = strongly agree'.

Validity and Reliability

It is crucial to consider the reliability and validity of a study. To validate the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a group of 30 lecturers from private universities. Through this pilot study, the researcher was able to ensure that (a) the wordings of the questions were correct; (b) the sequence of the questions was correct; and (d) the instructions were clear and adequate. Besides, Cronbach's alpha was tested to check the reliability of the questions for each construct. Cronbach's alpha value for all instruments were above 0.70 (from 0.90 to 0.751) indicate the reliability of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

SmartPLS 3.0 was used to execute partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyse the data, including validating the measurement model and estimating the structural and mediation models. PLS-SEM's relevance and applicability in HRM studies have been well-established in recent years (Ringle et al., 2020).

RESULTS

Common Method Bias

To detect the existence of method bias, the researchers conducted Harman's single-factor test before data analysis. The single factor was found to contribute approximately 24% of the data variance, which is lower than 50% (Cham et al., 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2012). The result indicates that common method bias is not a pervasive issue in the present study.

Assessing Reflective Measurement Model

Evaluation of a reflective measurement model consists of assessing construct reliability and validity by testing composite reliability, indicator outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. The results for outer loadings showed that all indicators had loadings >0.60 . The AVE for all constructs; career success (0.551), perceived external employability (0.526), and perceived internal employability (0.573), all achieved a threshold value $>.50$. The composite reliability values for all constructs ranged from 0.843 to 0.886, supporting internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, the HTMT criterion suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) was used to affirm discriminant validity. Discriminant validity problems are deemed present when HTMT values are >0.85 . As shown in Table 1, all HTMT values were <0.85 , supporting discriminant validity.



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Table 1
Results of HTMT Criterion

	CS	PEE	PIE
CS			
PEE	0.812		
PIE	0.732	0.743	

Note. Discriminant validity is established at HTMT0.85.

Note. CS=Career success, PEE=Perceived external employability, PIE=Perceived internal employability

Table 2 summarises the results for the measurement model assessment, in which all evaluation criteria were met, establishing the measurement model's reliability and validity. The model was thus fit for structural model estimation.

Table 2
Summary of Reflective Model Assessment Results

Latent Variables	Items	Convergent Validity		Internal Reliability	Consistency	Discriminant Validity
		Outer Loadings	AVE (>0.50)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	HTMT Criterion (<0.85 & CI do not include 0)
Career Success	CS1	0.738				
	CS2	0.765				
	CS3	0.763	0.551	0.880	0.837	Yes
	CS4	0.698				
	CS5	0.784				
	CS6	0.766				
Perceived External Employability	PEE1	0.798				
	PEE2	0.678				
	PEE3	0.705	0.526	0.886	0.849	Yes
	PEE4	0.794				
	PEE5	0.778				
	PEE6	0.698				
	PEE7	0.651				
Perceived Internal Employability	PIE1	0.750				
	PIE2	0.799	0.573	0.843	0.751	Yes
	PIE3	0.723				
	PIE4	0.753				

Assessing Reflective-Formative Higher-order Construct

As shown in Figure 2, Organisational learning practices in this model was conceptualised as a reflective-formative higher-order construct, formed by seven dimensions with three items reflecting each dimension, amounting to a total of 21 items. The repeated indicators approach with Mode B estimation (Becker et al., 2012) was used to



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assess the higher-order construct of organisational learning practices. Standard assessment criteria for the reflective model were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the lower-order (reflective) constructs. Subsequently, the relationships between the lower-order constructs and the higher-order construct were estimated to validate the higher-order construct.

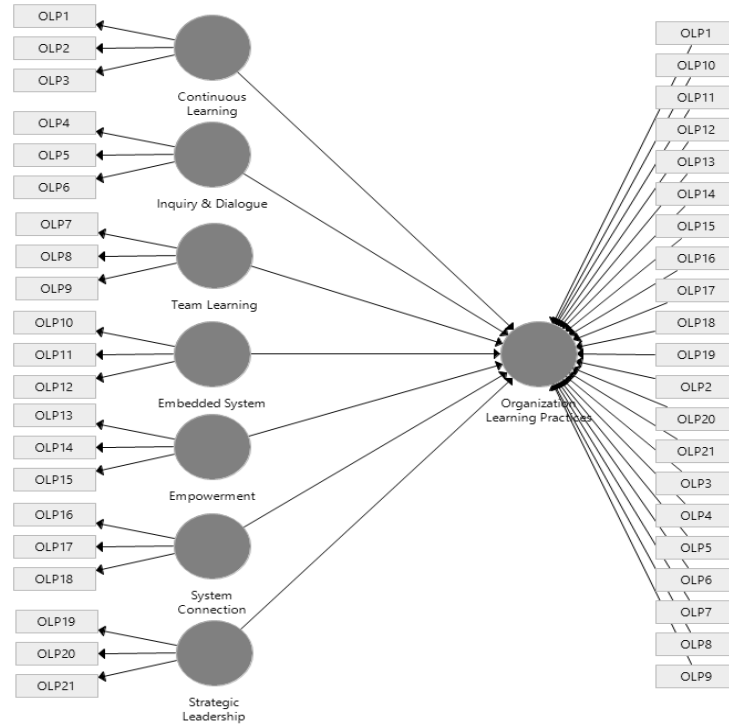


Figure 2. Hierarchical Component Model for Organisational Learning Practices

The results reported in Table 3 show that all reflective lower-order constructs' evaluation criteria were met and yielded satisfactory levels of reliability and validity. The composite reliability of the seven lower-order constructs ranged between 0.798 and 0.878, indicating that all these constructs possess a high level of reliability. Moreover, all indicator loadings exceeded the recommended value of 0.708, and the AVE values for these constructs (ranging from 0.569 to 0.706) also achieved the minimum threshold value of 0.50, showing that adequate convergent validity was achieved. Besides, the HTMT for all lower-order constructs is distinctively different at $HTMT_{0.85}$, further evidenced the discriminant validity of all the lower-order constructs. To sum up, all the assessment criteria for the reflective lower-order constructs were met and yielded satisfactory levels of reliability and validity.



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Table 3
Summary of Lower-order Measurement Model Assessment

Lower-order Construct	Item	Loadings	CR	AVE	HTMT (<0.85 & CI do not include 0)	Criterion
Continuous Learning (CL)	OL1	0.784	0.865	0.682	Yes	
	OL2	0.858				
	OL3	0.834				
Inquiry & Dialogue (ID)	OL4	0.735	0.820	0.604	Yes	
	OL5	0.794				
	OL6	0.801				
Team Learning (TL)	OL7	0.820	0.865	0.681	Yes	
	OL8	0.824				
	OL9	0.830				
Embedded System (ES)	OL10	0.793	0.854	0.661	Yes	
	OL11	0.842				
	OL12	0.803				
Empowerment (EP)	OL13	0.802	0.798	0.569	Yes	
	OL14	0.761				
	OL15	0.695				
System Connection (SC)	OL16	0.758	0.818	0.600	Yes	
	OL17	0.769				
	OL18	0.795				
Strategic Leadership (SL)	OL19	0.794	0.878	0.706	Yes	
	OL20	0.879				
	OL21	0.845				

Subsequently, redundancy analysis was conducted, in which the higher-order construct was related to a global item measurement (i.e., OLPG) that captured the respondents' overall feedback of the institution's organisational learning practices. Based on the results of redundancy analysis, the path coefficient magnitude between the two constructs (0.727) was greater than 0.70, whereas the R^2 value of 0.529 for the endogenous construct was above the threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). These results supported that the formative higher-order organisational learning practices construct had enough convergent validity. Also, collinearity was tested by examining the inner VIF for the formative higher-order construct, which should be less than 5.0 (Hair et al., 2019) or 3.3 (Diamantopoulos & Sigauw, 2006). As seen in Table 4, the VIF values of all the predictor constructs were less than 3.3; thus, no collinearity issues were found among the seven lower-order constructs.



Table 4
VIF Values for Higher-order Construct's Predictors

Formative Constructs	VIF values
Continuous Learning (CL)	1.588
Embedded System (ES)	2.279
Empowerment (EP)	1.923
Inquiry and Dialogue (ID)	1.678
Strategic Leadership (SL)	1.655
System Connection (SC)	1.570
Team Learning (TL)	2.317

The significance and relevance of the relationships between the lower-order constructs and higher-order construct were tested. The results shown in Table 5 reveal that all the lower-order constructs were significantly related (t-values >1.96 and p-values <0.05) to the higher-order organisational learning practices construct, providing evidence to retain all the dimensions. Moreover, the bootstrap confidence interval for all formative constructs does not include value zero, provide additional supports for the significance of weights. Thus, all seven lower-order constructs were found to be significant and relevant in forming the higher-order organisational learning practices construct.

Table 5
Significance of Weights for Higher-order Construct

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	T-Statistics	P Values	5.0%	95.0%
CL -> OLP	0.201	0.201	32.346	0.000	0.192	0.213
ES -> OLP	0.192	0.192	35.096	0.000	0.185	0.203
EP -> OLP	0.180	0.180	32.840	0.000	0.172	0.190
ID -> OLP	0.190	0.190	30,640	0.000	0.181	0.202
SL -> OLP	0.204	0.204	29.922	0.000	0.194	0.216
SC -> OLP	0.190	0.190	31.646	0.000	0.181	0.200
TL -> OLP	0.202	0.202	33.895	0.000	0.193	0.212

Note. CL=Continuous learning, ES=Embedded system, EP=Empowerment, ID=Inquiry & dialogue, SL=Strategic leadership, SC=System connection, TL=Team learning

Assessing the Structural Model

Bootstrapping was used to estimate the path coefficients and test the hypothesised relationships (Hair et al., 2019). The relationships were all found to be significant (organisational learning practices → career success, $\beta = 0.193$, $t > 1.645$, $p < 0.05$; organisational learning practices → perceived external employability, $\beta = 0.504$, $t > 1.645$, $p < 0.05$; organisational learning practices → perceived internal employability, $\beta = 0.558$, $t > 1.645$, $p < 0.05$). The model explained 56.3% of the variance in academic career success, 25.4% of perceived external, and 31.1% of internal employability. Overall, the model displayed acceptable predictive relevance since all Q^2 values ($Q^2 = 0.259$ for career success, 0.127 for external, and 0.160 for internal employability) were > 0. Table 6 summarises the results for the assessment of the structural model and the direct hypotheses testing.



Table 6

Results of Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	Decision	R ²	f ²	Q ²	
H1	OLP -> CS	0.192	0.056	3.438	Supported	0.563	0.054	0.259	
	PEE-> CS	0.489	0.045	10.997*	Supported				0.332
	PIE -> CS	0.194	0.048	4.053*	Supported				0.048
H2a	OLP-> PEE	0.504	0.049	10.264*	Supported	0.254	0.341	0.127	
H2b	OLP -> PIE	0.558	0.042	13.335*	Supported	0.311	0.451	0.160	

Note. OLP=Organisational learning practices, PEE = Perceived external employability, PIE = Perceived internal employability, CS = Career success; * p < .05, t > 1.65, one-tailed

Assessing the Mediation Model

The procedure suggested by Nitzl et al. (2016) was used to estimate the mediating effects of perceived external and internal employability. Bootstrapping confirmed the existence of significant indirect effects between organisational learning practices and career success ($\beta = 0.355$, $t = 9.500$) with a 95% BCa bootstrapped confidence interval (0.291 to 0.438), which did not straddle zero.

Multiple mediation analysis was conducted to validate and compare the mediating effects of perceived external and internal employability. Table 7 reports results of the specific indirect effects, total indirect effects, and the total effect of organisational learning practices on career success via the mediators. The results showed that the specific indirect effects of perceived external ($\beta = .247$, $t = 8.210$) and internal employability ($\beta = .108$, $t = 3.607$) were supported. The total indirect effect of both mediators ($\beta = 0.3554$, $t = 9.500$) and the total effect of organisational learning practices ($\beta = .549$, $t = 11.049$) were supported, with a stronger effect for external employability.

Table 7

Results of Mediation Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Specific Indirect Effect	Total Indirect Effect	Total Effect	95% Confidence Interval	Decision
H3	OLP→PIE→ CS	0.108*	0.355*	0.549*	(0.051; 0.168)	Supported
H4	OLP→PEE→ CS	0.247*			(0.169; 0.319)	Supported

Note. *Significant at p<0.05, t>1.96, two-tailed

To compare the strength of mediation between perceived external and internal employability, we adopted the “variance accounted for” (VAF) method to compute the indirect-to-total effect ratio. The VAF for perceived external employability (VAF = 0.247/0.547) was 0.45; whereas the VAF for perceived internal employability (0.108/0.547) was 0.198. Thus, the results supported that external employability perceptions accounted for a greater mediating effect (45%) than internal employability perceptions (20%) in the relationship between organisational learning practices and career success.



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DISCUSSION

The findings indicated that organisational learning practices related directly and indirectly to success via perceived external and internal employability. This finding is consistent with the previous studies claimed the positive relationship between organisational learning practices and academics' career success (Abu Said et al., 2015; Arokiasamy et al., 2014; Tee & Chan, 2016; Zafar & Mat, 2012). The results also showed that organisational learning practices positively predicted academics' perceived internal and external employability with a stronger effect for internal employability. The researcher notably highlights the findings from the social exchange and norm of reciprocity perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2017), assuming that organisational learning practices offered by the employer can be perceived as a signal that the organisation is keen to develop its employees, and provides them better internal developmental opportunities, which in turn, leads to higher perceived internal employability.

Evidently, organisational learning practices primarily aim to enhance internal employability; however, academics' participation in organisation-specific projects such as publication opportunities and internal seminars/conferences also grants them knowledge and skills that can be transferred to other institutions. As such, even though most organisational learning practices are internally oriented (Akkermans et al., 2019; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010), they do foster academic staff's increased marketability in the external labour market (perceived external employability).

It is surprising that while organisational learning practices produce a greater direct impact on perceived internal employability, academic staff still rely more on perceived external employability to determine their career success. This result is interesting since the role of perceived internal employability has been substituted by perceived external employability when both are entered into the regression model between organisational learning practices and career success. These findings suggest that academics' career success is more likely driven by something other than remaining employable within the institution and feeling obligated to reciprocate the training and development support from the organisation, as proposed by the social exchange and signalling theories. The inconsistent findings could be explained in two possible ways.

It should be noted that even though most academic training and development programmes are occupationally specific and internal-oriented, these occupational skills have greater transferable potential within an occupational cluster (i.e., academia) and are more applicable to all workplace contexts within academia. Implicitly, academics are more likely to work in a supportive environment (e.g. easy access to training and publication opportunities) and continuously develop themselves internally while seeking employment opportunities beyond organisational boundaries to determine their future career success. Academic staff might feel that their occupational expertise (in teaching, research, and publication) accumulated from organisational learning practices is part of their movement capital (Forrier et al., 2018) that can add value to their employment profile, particularly for external marketability. Therefore, it is possible that besides internal employability, academics' career success is driven by the expectation of career advancement beyond the organisational boundary. Furthermore, the results may imply that academic staff are overly optimistic about employment opportunities in the external labour market, given the tremendous growth of the higher education industry in Malaysia and the intensifying 'war for talent' in academia due to the shortage of quality academic staff (Khalid, 2019; Van den Brink et al., 2013). Consequently, academic staff in Malaysia might be placing more emphasis on perceived external employability to determine their career success.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, the results add to the theoretical understanding of the general perceptions of academics and the control they have over their career success, which has implications for future studies aiming to investigate outcomes associated with perceived employability. The findings provide evidence that employability management might be considered a useful resource for academics when managing their career, since perceived employability is a key antecedent of their success. Moreover, this study contributes to the literature on the employability management paradox by exploring how organisational learning practices (or investments) benefit employees by



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enhancing their employability perceptions both internally and externally. Following the expectation of the employability paradox, the results show that both perceived internal and external employability positively mediate the relationship between organisational learning practices and career success. However, it was expected that organisational learning practices lead to higher career success via perceived internal employability rather than perceived external employability. The findings suggest otherwise. Indeed, perceived external employability has greater direct and mediating impacts on academics' career success. Therefore, the findings put the employability paradox in perspective and shed more light on the employability-career success relationship. More theoretical refinement and empirical research are needed with regards to the roles of perceived internal and external employability in determining academics' career success and concurrently creating a mutual win-win situation for PHEIs that invest in employability enhancement and its academic staff's future success and well-being.

In terms of practical implications, this study supports that sustaining and developing one's employability is a benchmark for career success: employability is an essential aspect of people management in today's career landscape (Guilbert et al., 2016). Consequently, rather than being conservative and resistant to change, academics must be self-directed, proactive, flexible, and adaptable in managing their employability. On the other hand, the universities can undertake actions to promote their internal employability. Institutions should play their role in managing academics' employability as part of the "new psychological contract". For example, they can provide more training opportunities to improve academics' skills in teaching, research, and publishing, as well as offering more development opportunities in the form of encouragement and sponsorship of academic participation in local and international seminars, workshops, and conferences. Academics who perceive a wider array of developmental opportunities in their institution are more likely to stay with the institution to safeguard those opportunities for their future career development.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study employed a cross-sectional design, where data were collected at one point in time. Since employability and career success are time-bound concepts that reflect individuals' accumulated experiences and their effects over time (Judge et al., 2010), respondents might have different responses towards career outcomes at different stages of their career. A cross-sectional study cannot capture the evolving process of career development. For this reason, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies by building time parameters at two or more points of measurement to reflect respondents' experiences over time. By exploring the role of time in career outcomes, a longitudinal study could shed additional light on the time-sensitive nomological links among variables in the model, which could help institutions develop high impact intervention programs at different critical time points in academics' career lifespan.

CONCLUSION

This study uncovered the impacts of organisational learning practices on perceived employability and, ultimately, academic staff's career success in Malaysia. These research findings are particularly meaningful for PHEIs in formulating and implementing effective HRD strategies not only to manage their academic staff effectively but also to create a sustainable competitive advantage for institutions to cope with intense competition due to globalisation and the commercialisation of the higher education industry in Malaysia.



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