

CAREER DECISION-MAKING COMPETENCE, SELF-KNOWLEDGE, AND OCCUPATIONAL EXPLORATION: A MODEL FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

University graduates are often lacking in soft-skills and job-seeking skill which affect their career decision-making skills. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to explore the factors that might potentially drive the career decision-making of graduates. Specifically, this study aims at developing a career decision-making competency model for effective career decision among graduating students. The sample for this research consisted of 1655 graduating students from universities in Malaysia. Participants were recruited using the cluster sampling method. Four instruments were used in this research namely, demographic information sheet, Self-Esteem scale, Job-search scale and Career decision-making scale. The instruments used were tested for their validity and reliability. Confirmatory Factor Analysis AMOS was used to obtain the best-fit measurement models from the variables. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses. The findings show that there are significant relationships between self-knowledge (SK) and career decision-making (CDM), and occupational exploration (OE) and career decision-making (CDM). The result for testing invariance of a structural model for multi-group analysis showed a validation model of self-knowledge (SK), occupational exploration (OE) and career decision making (CDM). Based on this finding, it is imperative for graduating university students to enhance their self-knowledge, occupational exploration, and self-confidence in order to portray a positive attitude that will lead to work-related engagement.

Keywords: Career decision-making, self-knowledge, occupational exploration, graduating university students

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Western context, there is a parameter to design students for the working world. An instance of this guideline is the National Career Development Guidelines Competencies and Indicators (Zunker, 2006). This guideline is to accentuate the necessity in arranging students for the working globe and in incorporating existence acts into upcoming way of life. These skills and pointers present a momentous experimental to institutions of higher discovering and indirectly point out the significance of these guidelines and the demand for competent development progress programmes. The competencies as highlighted by Zunker (2006) are as follows: Self-knowledge (self-concept, effective behaviours, develop changes and transitions), Occupational Exploration (participate in education and training, give in work and lifelong discovering, find, assess, and elucidate data, design to pursue, attain, uphold, and change jobs, understand how the needs and purposes of area impact the environment and construction of work), Occupation Arranging (make decisions, understand the encounter of work on individual and relations existence, understand the tolerating adjustments in male/female acts and make occupation transitions).

Inside the twenty-first century place of work, academic qualification is now not a passport to secure or protect jobs (Mazwin, 2006). Employers are more and more searching out extra than a simply academic degree acquaintance and hard skills; they desire ‘work-ready’ graduates alongside wanted soft-skills. Employers worldwide own been acute considering graduates and their readiness for the globe of work (NCIHE, 2009). Similarly, Malaysian employers are in general not happy alongside the level of soft-skills owned by graduates going into the workforce. According to them, Malaysian graduates typically were fit in their area of studies, but they lacked self-confidence and skills in arranging for job-search (Zuraidah, 2008), and their focal downsides are lack of affirmative attitude, assurance, and preparedness for job-search (Lazaroo, 2008). In addition, there is a lack of soft-skills and competencies amid presently graduating students (self-confidence, affirmative attitude, skills of arranging for job-search, and contact skills) in relation to employability.

The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia reported that 68,473 graduates were unemployed in 2013. Based on a report by MOHE in 2013, 25% of graduates failed to find work after graduation. A report from The National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN) revealed that graduates are unskilled to be employed for the reason that they lack oral and written communication skills in English, lack interpersonal relationship skills, are unable to instill motivation, and asked for a high salary. They are also unable to work as a team, repudiated to learn, are self-interested and are excessively selective about jobs (Wei, 2011). Career decision-making is one of the fields that must be developed by learners to achieve Vision 2020 in Malaysia. It is also one of the three aspects of students’ self-development that needs to be well-thought-out. The career selection process is a very complex process and it involves a wide range of applications such as knowledge, skills, and experiences related to career decision-making. Therefore, one important aspect in the career-related decision-making process is information regarding the profession concerned (Rusli & Nur Naha, 2010).

Other studies found that, Malaysian graduates normally were qualified in their area of studies, but they lacked self-confidence and lack skills of prepare for job-search (Zuraidah, 2008), and their main drawbacks are lack of positive attitude, confidence, and prepare for job-

search (Lazaroo, 2008). Based on suggestion from Ranjit's (2009) cluster of soft-skills, the current research focus on self-knowledge, occupational exploration, and career decision-making as the variables involved in the present research.

Based on the subjects connected alongside the graduating students' soft-skills, the scrutiny focuses on emergent ideal on Self-Knowledge, Occupational Exploration and Career Decision-Making amid graduating students. This scrutiny examined the connection amid Self-Knowledge (SK), Occupational Exploration (OE), and Career Decision-Making (CDM) amid graduating students in Malaysia. Moderator variables tested are gender, academic presentation, and variety of the universities. Hopefully, the consequence of the scrutiny will benefit the imminent job seekers amid the students. Instituted in Figure 1, the scrutiny framework was formulated to seize into thought on the scrutiny objectives and hypotheses that were derived from the problem statement. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to discover a relationship between self-knowledge, occupational exploration and career decision making as an indicator to develop a model of career decision making competency for graduating students.

This study provides insight understanding on Self Knowledge (SK), Occupational Exploration (OE), and Career Decision-Making (CDM) variables can support the competency career decision making for graduating university students in Malaysia. The relationship between under study variables is shown in following Figure 1.

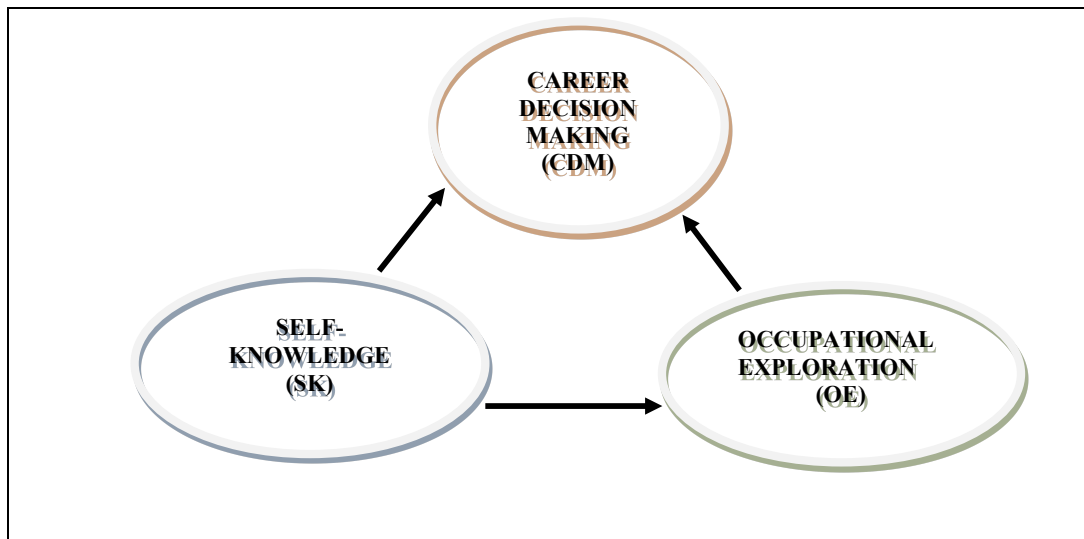


Figure 1: Research Framework of Competency Career Decision Making for graduating university students

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive quantitative research design with survey method was used in order to achieve the objectives of this research. The cluster sampling procedure or multistage sampling was used to recruit the sample. The sample for this research consists of graduating students from technical universities and non-technical universities in Malaysia which involved 1655 students. The distribution of the respondents according to the university revealed that respondents from UTHM 238 (14.4%), USM 238 (14.4%), UUM 238 (14.4%) are the highest group compared to UNIMAP 209 (12.6%), UPSI 200 (12.1%), UTeM 183 (11.1%), UMS 109 (6.6%), UMT 92 (5.6%), UNIMAS 89 (5.4%), and UMP 59 (3.6%).

The instruments used in this research are demographic information sheet, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SK), the Job Search Scale (OE) and the Career Decision Making Scale (CDM). All the questionnaires were tested for their validity and reliability. The questionnaires were printed in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. The self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the graduating students during their classes. To test the hypotheses mentioned the AMOS-Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) model fitting program was used to achieve the best-fit measurement models from the variables. Multi-group Analysis was conducted across three moderators namely gender, academic performance (CGPA) and type of university in order to get the best fit model for this research.

3. COGNITIVE INFORMATION PROCESSING APPROACH AND RELATED WORK

Theory connected to the present research is the career decision-making theory that requested the Cognitive Information Processing (henceforth, CIP) approach. The CIP theory was industrialized by Peterson et al. (1991). The CIP theory is connected to how people make a career decision in 'career problem solving and decision-making'. The CIP way is established on four assumptions (Sampson et al. 2004). The first assumption is concerning with 'career problem solving and decision-making' that involve our emotions (effect) in addition to our thoughts (cognition). The second is concerning competent 'career problem solving and decision-making' that involve knowledge and the procedure of thinking concerning the knowledge we possess and gained. Knowledge is the content of occupation choice and thinking is the procedure we use to make choices. The third is what we understand concerning ourselves and the globe we live in that is steadily evolving and interacting. As we discover from experience in existence, we coordinate what we understand concerning ourselves and the globe in extra convoluted ways. Finally, career problem solving and decision-making are skills that we use to enhance our skills in making choices across discovering and practice.

The CIP theory is projected to aid people come to be career problem solvers and decision makers across their lifetimes by teaching them the career and life planning skills (McLennan et al. 1999). Figure 2 displays a pyramid alongside three hierarchically coordinated areas that contain the 'knowledge domain', 'decision-making skills domain', and 'executive processing domain'. Starting from the centre two frank areas of fundamental domains of knowledge are self-knowledge and occupational knowledge. Self-knowledge includes individuals' perceptions and occupational knowledge includes knowledge of individuals' occupations on how the globe of work is organized. The decision-making skill is the subsequent area and it encompasses the

programmes that aid individuals to the implementation of a solution. At this level of the area the CASVE series will be utilized as a specific way to problem-solving and decision-making (Sampson et al. 2004).

Similarly, in this present research, the CIP way possesses been selected established on the strength of the area encompassed (knowledge, decision-making, and executive processing) and can be applicable to the respondents in this research. The respondents of this research are yet in the discovery period of vocational progress and must to be involved in the tasks of crystallizing a sense of self and enumerating and requesting an occupational choice. In making an occupational choice, the CIP way counselled that people make use of the occupational knowledge and knowledge of self.

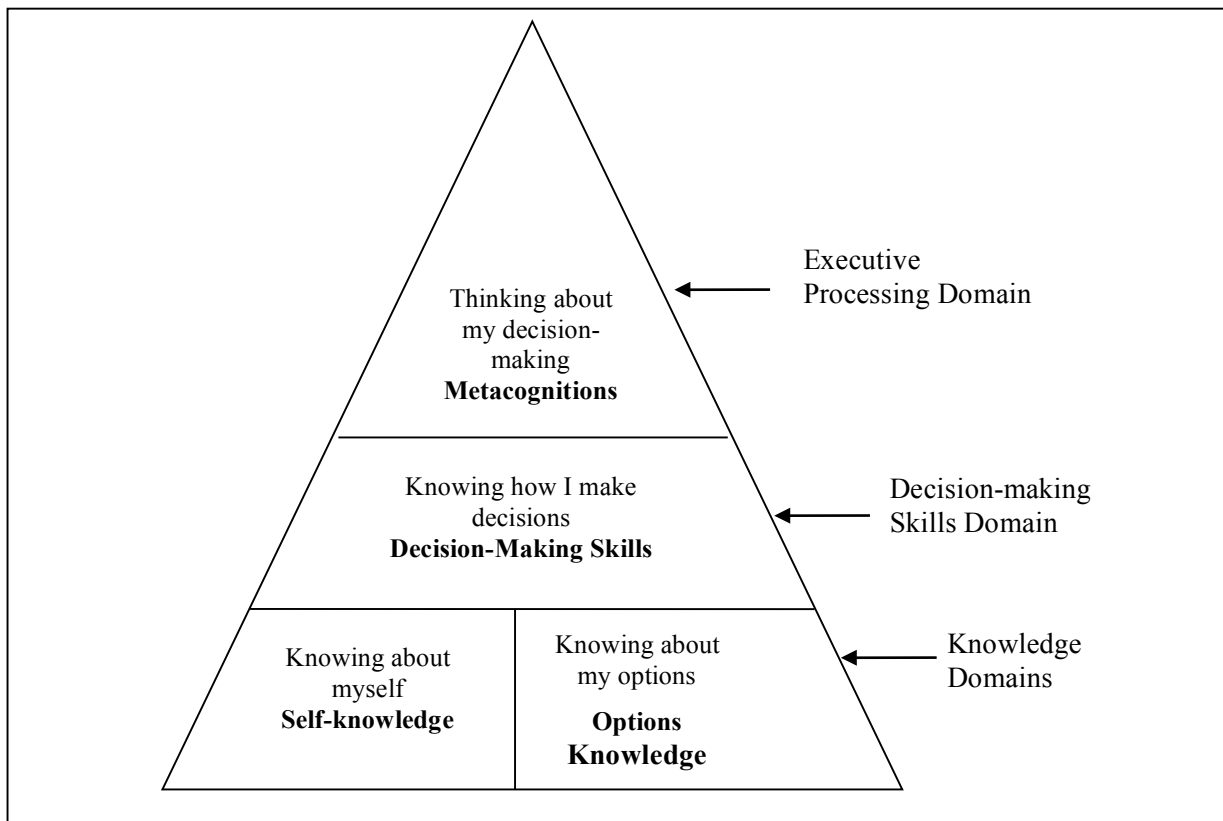


Figure 2: Pyramid of information processing domains (Sampson et al. 2004)

In the Western context, there is a guideline to design students for the working world. An example of this guideline is the National Career Development Guidelines Competencies and Indicators (NCDGCI) (Zunker, 2006). This guideline is to underscore the necessity of arranging students for the work globe and in incorporating existence acts into upcoming lifestyles. These competencies and indicators present a momentous trial to institutions of higher discovering and indirectly point out the significance of these guidelines and the demand for competent career development programmes. The competencies are established on self-knowledge, education and occupational discovery, in addition to career planning.

The competencies as highlighted by Zunker (2006) are self-knowledges, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning. First competency Self-knowledge involved maintains a positive self-concept, maintain effective behaviors, and know the development changes and transitions. For the Educational and Occupational Exploration involved entering and participate in education and training, participate in work and lifelong learning, locate, evaluate, and interpret information, prepare to seek, obtain, maintain, and change jobs, know how the needs and functions of society influence the nature and structure of work. The third competency is Career Planning which involves make decisions, know the impact of work on individual and family life, know the continuing changes in male/female roles, and make career transitions.

Unfortunately, in the Malaysian education arrangement, there is no such average guideline in word of arranging the students for the working life. All the preparations given to the students are established on the needs needed by the association itself. Therefore, so as to be a competent career development centre, the counselors can assist students to ascertain paths that will lead to career satisfaction amid graduating students beforehand they go in the job market.

Innumerable studies have been conducted to inquire into the relationship between self-knowledge and career decision-making. Leah (2012) discovered a connection amid self-esteem and career choices amongst African American high school learners. The consequence displays that self-esteem possesses a connection alongside occupation choices amid students ($p=.033$, $P<.05$). Reno (2011) led a survey on self-esteem and career decision-making amid 609 Latina American female college students of California State University. This scrutiny concentrated on the connection amid the level of self-esteem and career decision-making amid female students. The consequence displayed an affirmative correlation amid the level of self-esteem and career decision-making amid Latina American female college learners. Research done by Norida et al. (2011) found that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem, career decision making and job search intensity among final year university students. Results from this study reveal that university students should prepare themselves before they enter the job market.

The findings from this study validated that there is a connection amid self-esteem and career decision-making. This is comparable to studies led on self-esteem and career decision-making that point out a connection amid students' sphere self-esteem and career decision-making, personality and career decision-making in addition to the impact of social psychology on career choice (Guranda, 2014; Korkmaz, 2015).

The research that was done by Chen and Liew (2015) engrossed on factors that influence career decision-making among graduating students from Malaysian private higher educational institutions. This research institute highlighted that there is a positive relationship between occupational exploration and career decision-making difficulties (CDMD). Other than that, research on occupational exploration and career decision-making among French and Korean adolescents (Sovet & Metz, 2014) establish that male students have low occupational exploration in making career decisions while female students have high occupational exploration to make a decision. The results display that there is a positive correlation between occupational exploration and career decision making among students.

Besides that, Hmileski and Baron (2008) surveyed how occupational exploration influences college students' career decision-making and ability to acclimatize in different environments. An interaction was observed between self-exploration, optimism, dynamism, to career decision-

making. Results revealed that students with high self-occupational exploration have high levels of making a decision for employability. In addition, Koen et al. (2010) examined the impact of people's direct behaviors of job-search strategies and showed that job-search strategies were predictors of a successful reemployment. An important preparatory in the job-search process is the role of job-seekers' career adaptability. In this research, the results show that occupational exploration has a relationship with career decision-making.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Hypothesis 1: Self-knowledge influences career decision-making among graduating students

The factor loadings in the final revised model (Figure 3) are largely significant with CFI ($\geq .9$) = .99, TLI ($\geq .9$) = .98, GFI ($\geq .9$) = .98 and RMSEA ($\leq .08$) = .05. The relative chi-square (≤ 5.0) = 4.85 also met the criteria for fit indices. Therefore, there is a significant relationship with a value of .23 between self-knowledge and career decision-making among graduating students. The results indicated that self-knowledge is related to career decision-making among graduating students. Self-knowledge and career decision-making have a positive relationship with the full-fledged structural equation modelling model. When self-knowledge increases, career decision-making also increases. Therefore, it is important for undergraduates to build their self-knowledge in order to make them more confident in preparing themselves for their careers.

This finding also reveals some correspondences with other findings of prior research on the relationship between self-knowledge and career decision-making. Previous research found the relationship between self-knowledge and career decision making among students, the relationship between self-knowledge (self-esteem) and career decision-making self-efficacy (Norida et.al, 2014), the relationship between career decision difficulty and self-knowledge among college students (Ali & Shah, 2013), the relationship between self-knowledge and career choices amongst African American high school students (Leah, 2012), and self-knowledge and career decision making among Latina American female college students (Reno, 2011).

Hypothesis 2: Occupational exploration influences career decision-making among graduating students

The factor loadings in the final revised model (Figure 3) are substantially significant with CFI ($\geq .9$) = .99, TLI ($\geq .9$) = .98, GFI ($\geq .9$) = .98 and RMSEA ($\leq .08$) = .05. The relative chi-square (≤ 5.0) = 4.85 also met the criteria for fit indices. Therefore, there is a strong significant relationship with a value of .30 between Occupational Exploration (OE) and Career Decision-Making (CDM) among graduating students. The result shows that occupational exploration has a strong relationship with career decision-making among students. Chen and Liew (2015) found that there is a positive relationship between occupational exploration and career decision-making (CDM). Skorikov (2007) studied factors affecting career preparation behaviour and career decision-making has been found to be a leading variable of behaviour occupational exploration. There is a relationship between career decision-making and occupational exploration and students who have high career decision-making abilities have high occupational exploration (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins 2010).

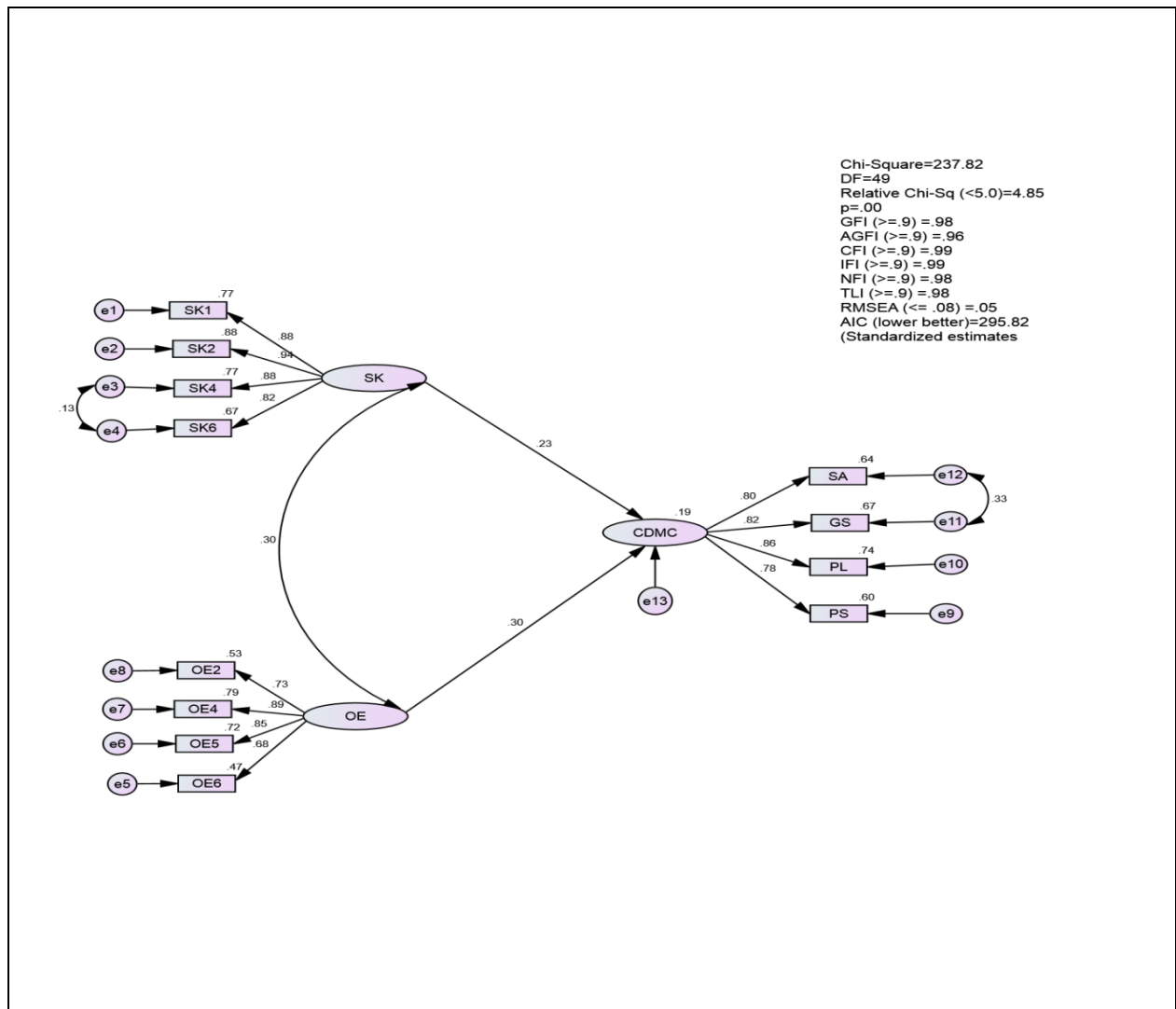


Figure 3: Empirical results of the hypothesized structural relationship between self-knowledge (SK), occupational exploration (OE), and career decision-making (CDM)

The discovering of this research additionally supports the CIP theory and the National Career Development Guidelines Competencies Indicators by Zunker (2006) that possess been denoted to in the present research. The CIP theory possesses been transformed into three main areas as in Figure 2. The candid area is the knowledge areas that encompassed self-knowledge – knowing concerning self and options knowledge – knowing concerning own option. The second area in this theory is decision-making skills area that includes problem-solving and decision-making skills. As remarked by Saks (2005) both variables possess a relationship. Both areas are interrelated and prop every single supplementary and are comparable to the self-knowledge and occupation decision-making in this research. The areas of the pyramid are powerfully interrelated from top down (Sampson et al. 2004). As such, the discovering of the connections amid self-knowledge and occupation decision-making in this research supports the believed of the CIP theory as remarked by Sampson et al. (2004). It displays that the graduating university

students must to design themselves alongside self-knowledge and occupational knowledge so as to make decisions and resolve problems. Instituted on the competencies as highlighted by Zunker (2006), displays that these competencies and indicators present a momentous trial to institutions of higher discovering and indirectly point out the significance of these guidelines and the demand for competent career development programmes. The competencies are established on self-knowledge, education and occupational discovery, in addition to career planning.

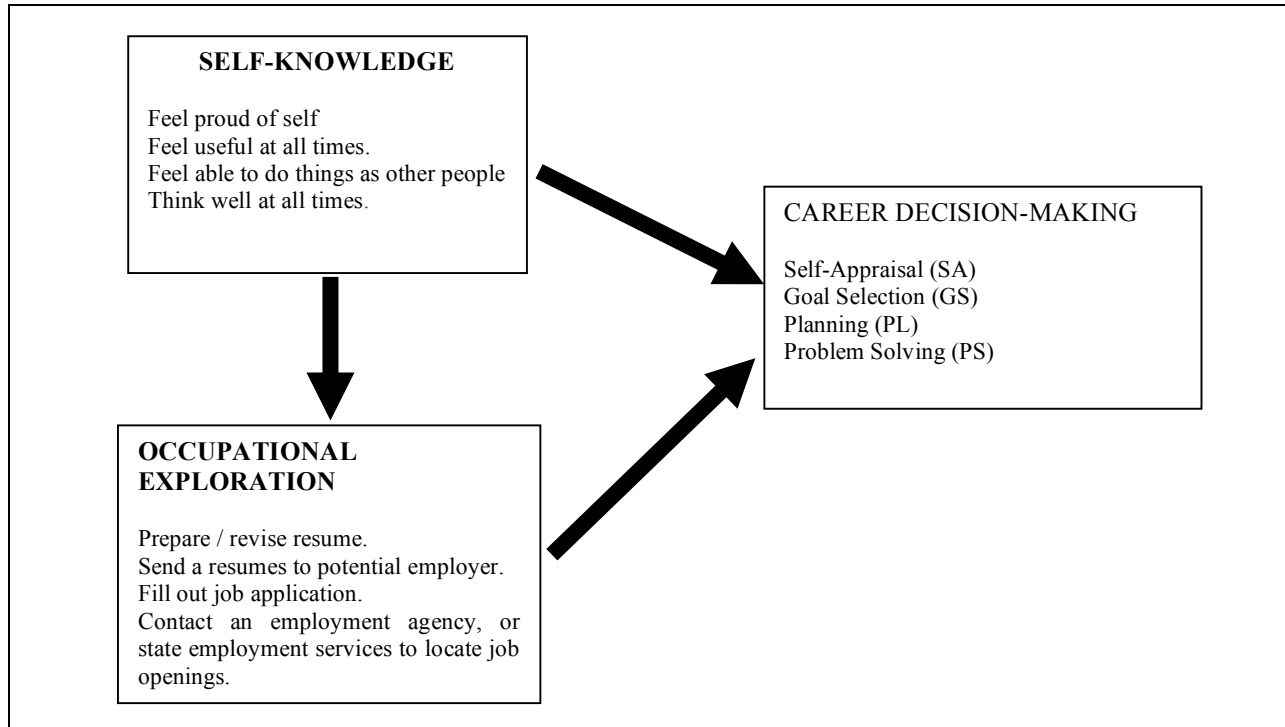


Figure 4: Model of Competency Career Decision-Making (CCDM) for graduating students

The main purpose of this research is to develop a competency career decision-making model for graduating university students as shown in Figure 4. The items for Self-Knowledge (SK) represent four statements such as feel proud of self, feel useful at all times, feel able to do things as other people and think well at all times. These four statements show factor loading above .50 (Hair et al., 2010) which indicates that the statements represent the self-knowledge indicator. The items for the Occupational Exploration (OE) shows that four statements such as prepare for a resume, send resumes to a potential employer, fill out a job application and contact an employment agency indicated that factor loading for these four statements above .50 which represents occupational exploration indicator.

The career decision making components represented by twenty statements related with four sub-scales such as Self-Appraisal (SA), Goal Selection (GS), Career Planning (CP), and Problem Solving (PS). These twenty statements also show factor loading above .50 which represents career decision making indicator. It shows that the graduating students should prepare themselves in order to make decisions more confidently regarding career, occupation, career plans, career problem solving, and job information search. This model will be useful for the graduating university students in order to prepare themselves for career development. At this

stage, the graduating students will explore and learn about the world of work and occupations, develop skills and make tentative choices in career behavior. It is similar to the CIP approach which suggests that individuals make use of occupational knowledge and knowledge of self in making an occupational choice. Therefore, it can be concluded that the CCDM model which consists of self-knowledge, occupational exploration and career decision-making is a significant model for the graduating university students.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researchers found that there is a significant relationship between self-knowledge, and occupational exploration, and career decision-making among graduating students. A career decision-making competency model for students employability based on three variables tested was developed as in Figure 3 and Figure 4. The findings show that there are significant relationships between self-knowledge and career decision-making as well as between occupational exploration and career decision-making. From this finding, it is very important for graduating students to build up their self-knowledge in order to make them more confident in preparing themselves for their careers. The findings also show that educational and occupational exploration has a strong relationship on career decision-making among graduating students.

Therefore, it is important for the graduating university students to enhance their self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration and self-confidence from the first year of their studies in order to portray a positive attitude that will lead to work-related engagement. They should also pay more attention when they are preparing for the working life. Practitioners such as guidance counsellors can help students to understand themselves and others based on self-knowledge, occupational exploration, and career decision-making process. This involves the development of student's personality, thinking, behaviour and emotion. Consequently, issues pertaining to students' soft-skills and confidence level can be covered in order to achieve Vision 2020 in Malaysia.

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