

Workplace Attitudes Skills: A Study of Vocational College Graduates

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Abstract

This study to determine the proficiency of workplace attitudes skills among Malaysian vocational college graduates based on employers' perceptions. The research aligns with the national aspiration to develop skills by 2035. A quantitative approach was adopted using a four-point Likert scale questionnaire. The sample comprised 300 technical graduates selected through a two-stage cluster sampling method and 129 employers selected using purposive sampling. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings reveal a significant relationship between graduates gender and workplace attitudes and skills proficiency. A mean spider web analysis identified noticeable gaps between graduates' self-assessments and employers' evaluations, particularly in workplace attitudes skills. The results suggest the need for continuous enhancement of workplace attitudes skills competencies to ensure better alignment between vocational college graduates and industry expectations. This study provides practical implications for vocational institutions in strengthening employability attributes and supporting future workforce development.

Keywords: Workplace Attitudes Skills, Vocational Colleges

Introduction

Aligned with the aspirations of the Malaysia Education Plan 2026–2035 (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan, 2026) which highlights the importance of nurturing holistic, competitive and value-driven human capital among vocational college graduates, these competencies are essential to meeting the evolving demands of today's industries. The RPM 2026–2035 places strong emphasis on enhancing non-technical skills, including effective communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, information management, leadership and organisational abilities, teamwork, workplace attitudes, and self-management skills.

Possessing these skills can enhance employee productivity and strengthen relationships with colleagues and customers. Thereby contributing to a more positive and efficient work environment. At the same time, industries can better prepare their workforce to address

future challenges while fostering a supportive and high-performing workplace culture (Alaa, 2024).

Workplace Attitudes Skills		
Commitment to work responsibilities	Willingness to learn and improve	Takes initiative beyond assigned tasks
Displays genuine interest in assigned duties	Works effectively in a team	Task-oriented and goal-driven
Manages work pressure effectively	Effort in completing tasks	Positive work habits
Accepts constructive criticism professionally	Shows readiness to undergo training	Adheres to deadlines and punctuality
Understands workplace culture and environment	Manages stress effectively	Understanding of teamwork dynamics
Open-mindedness in professional	Shows respect toward colleagues and supervisors	Diligence in task completion
Strives for quality and excellence in work	Tolerance and adaptability	Self-control in challenging situations

Figure 1 : Elements of workplace attitudes skills
(De Lange, 2000; Hadina Habil et al., 2006; Nabil, 2012; Zaliza, 2015, Ghouse et al., 2018 and Alaa, 2024)

Literature Review

Workplace attitude skills not only support productivity and harmony in the workplace, but also enhance graduates' competitiveness in the job market. Graduates who demonstrate a proactive attitude, adaptability, strong work ethics and effective interpersonal skills are perceived as being better prepared to contribute to organisational success compared to those who excel solely in technical competencies (Azyan et. al., 2025)

Therefore, vocational education institutions need to strengthen their curricula and instructional strategies to ensure that these attitude-related skills are systematically developed through practical training, industry exposure, and collaborative industry-oriented learning approaches. Such efforts can help bridge the gap between industry expectations and graduate readiness, ultimately improving employability and producing a workforce that meets current industry demands.

Method

The methodology describes the comprehensive structure of the research, including the study design, identification of the target population and sampling approach, tools and instruments utilized, methods of data collection and the techniques employed to analyze the data to ensure validity, reliability and meaningful findings.

Research Design

Specifically, we examined whether the study applied the Two-Stage Cluster Sampling method, a form of proportional random sampling, in selecting the graduate sample. This probability sampling approach enables researchers to identify potential gaps within the population while ensuring that the sample remains robust and statistically measurable (Chua, 2014). For the employer survey, a purposive sampling as a method. The questionnaire was

distributed exclusively to companies associated with vocational college graduates, particularly those currently employing individuals who have graduated from vocational colleges. This approach allows the researcher to deliberately select respondents who meet specific criteria aligned with the objectives of the study, thereby ensuring relevance and depth of information (Chua, 2014).

Population and Sample

The population for this study was determined based on data obtained from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia. It comprises a total of 23,927 vocational college graduates from cohorts one to four, as well as employers who currently hire these graduates across the Northern, Central, Eastern, Southern and Sabah Sarawak zones of Malaysia. The sample size was calculated using G*Power software (Version 3.1.9.4). A total of 300 technical Vocational College graduates and 129 employers from various Malaysian industries were selected to participate as respondents in this study.

Instrument

In this study, questionnaire as a research to identify the non-technical skill elements of vocational college graduates, while also including employers who currently employ these graduates. The questionnaire for graduates was divided into three sections. Part A collected demographic information, such as gender, field of study, and work experience. Parts B and C focused on assessing the key non-technical skills considered essential for graduates, as supported by previous studies (De Lange, 2000; Hadina Habil et al., 2006; Nabil, 2012; Ghouse, Chaudhary, & Garg, 2018).

For Parts B and C, a four-point Likert scale was used to measure responses, consistent with the study's objectives. According to Weksi (2013), Likert scales are effective tools for capturing individual perceptions while minimizing errors in data analysis. The four-point scale, in particular, is recommended as it encourages respondents to provide more definitive answers, thereby enhancing the reliability and clarity of the collected data.

Data Analysis

A data normality test was conducted to assess whether the collected data are distributed within a normal range prior to performing inferential statistical analysis. The results of this normality assessment are presented below :-

Table 1

Data normality test

Test	Coefficient value (p)	Data Interpretation
<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</i>	0.00	Abnormal
<i>Shapiro-Wilks</i>	0.00	Abnormal

To examine the gap between the proficiency level of workplace attitude skills among vocational college graduates and employer requirements, the researchers employed the Wilcoxon Test. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in non-technical skill

mastery based on gender, the Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to compare male and female graduates. Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to analyze differences across fields of study, while Spearman’s correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between graduates’ work experience and their non-technical skill levels.

Results and Discussion

The industries involved in this study include the construction, manufacturing, processing and service industries.

Proficiency of workplace attitude skills by vocational college graduates and employers’ perceptions

The mean and standard deviation were computed to evaluate the workplace attitude skills demonstrated by vocational college graduates, as well as the skills deemed essential by employers for these graduates to possess.

Table 2

Mean and proficiency of elements of workplace attitude skills by vocational college Graduates

Element	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Workplace Attitude Skills	3.30	0.48	High

Table 3

Mean and proficiency of elements of workplace attitude skills from employers' perceptions needed

Element	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Workplace Attitude Skills	3.53	0.49	High

To address this research gap, a mean spider web analysis was conducted to identify discrepancies between the skills of Vocational College graduates and the expectations of employers. The findings indicate a notable gap in workplace attitude skills, with graduates scoring an average of 3.30 compared to an employer expectation of 3.53. This difference of 0.23 highlights a significant shortfall, which raises concerns regarding the preparedness of graduates for entry into the workforce.

Employers are placing growing emphasis on hiring graduates who demonstrate not only strong technical expertise but also well-developed essential skills (Alaa, 2024)

The Relationship between gender and proficiency level of workplace attitude skills

The researcher analyzed by using the Mann-Whitney U Test to determine the difference between of 176 male graduates (58.7%) and 124 female graduates (41.3%) were involved in this study.

Table 4

Mean for Proficiency of workplace attitude skills by Gender

Elemen	Male		Female	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Workplace Attitude Skills	3.27	0.51	3.34	0.45

Next, table 5 shows the relationship between the proficiency of workplace attitude skills between the genders of Vocational College graduates was analyzed using the Man-Whitney U.

Table 5

Relationship between the proficiency of workplace attitude skills between the genders

Gender	Rank Mean	Z (Test Coefficient)	P (Significant value)
Male (n = 176)	146.49	-0.980	0.327
Female (n = 124)	156.20		

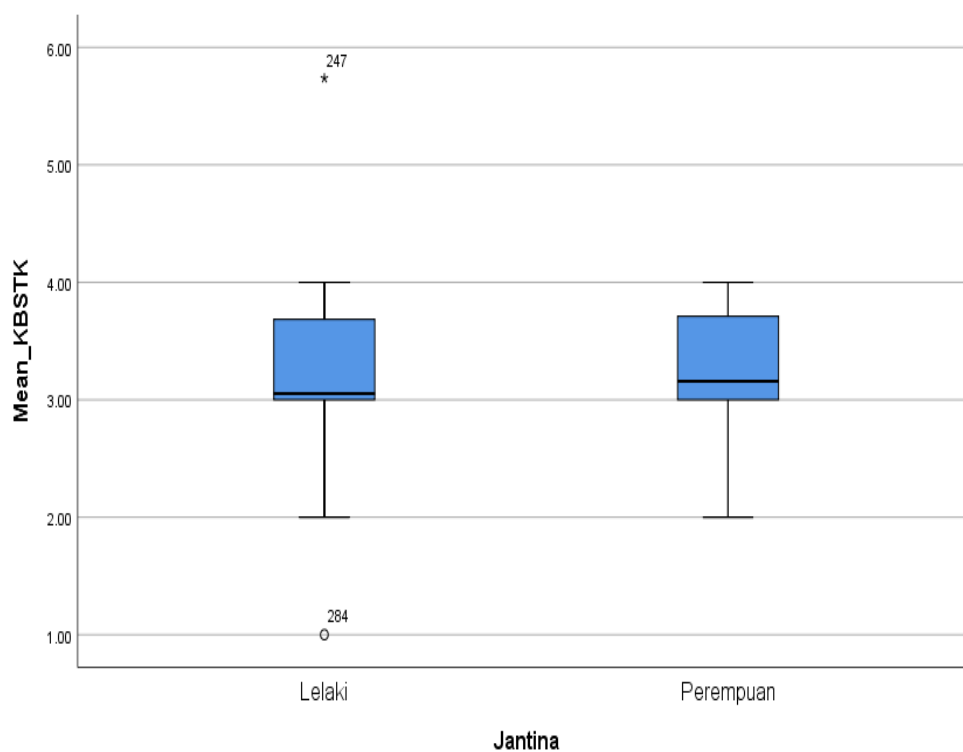


Diagram 1 : Boxplot graph of workplace attitude skills for gender (jantina) of graduates. male (lelaki) female (perempuan)

The Boxplot graph shows that the median values of the graduates' genders are the same. The shape of this graph supports the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Table 6

Mean for mastery of workplace attitude skills elements by field of study

Element	Mean	Standard Deviation
Construction Technology (CTP)	3.20	0.45
Electronic Technology (ETN)	3.25	0.42
Electric Technology (ETE)	3.28	0.38
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Technology (MPP)	3.14	0.37
Automotive Technology (MTA)	3.12	0.55
Industrial Machining Technology (MPI)	3.06	0.43
Welding Technology (MTK)	3.31	0.62

The results of the analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test for the relationship between the mean proficiency of workplace attitude skills and the graduate's field of study shown in table 7.

Table 7

Mean relationship of mastery of workplace attitude skills with graduate field of study.

Element	χ^2	p	Result	Nul Hipotesis
Workplace Attitude Skills	8.171	0.226	Non-Significant	Non-Significant

Findings from this research, the proficiency of workplace attitude skills of Graduates and the work experience of vocational college graduates are analyzed by using correlation between two variables (bivariate correlation) which is Spearman's correlation method. The range of values for 'r' (correlation coefficient) indicates that it is in an ordinal scale. Based on the 'r' value, researchers can assess the strength of the relationship between work experience variables and elements of workplace attitude skills.

Table 8

Shows relationship correlations for proficiency of workplace attitude skills elements according to work experience.

Element	Mean	Std. Div	Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation
Workplace Attitude Skills	3.30	0.48	0.15	Very low

Based on our findings, this study fulfils its objective of deepening the understanding of workplace attitude skills as a significant phenomenon, particularly in terms of how these skills can be cultivated and effectively applied to prepare graduates for employment. The study also highlights the progression of research on workplace attitude skills over time. Importantly, such skills should not remain conceptual in nature, they must be intentionally nurtured and practised within authentic social and professional settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the enhancement of workplace attitude skills among vocational college graduates is consistent with the aspirations of the Malaysia Education Plan (RPM) 2026–2035 to produce a highly skilled, ethical and resilient workforce. Continuous and collaborative engagement between vocational colleges and industry partners is vital to ensure that graduates not only meet technical competencies but also demonstrate professionalism,

responsibility and integrity in contributing to national economic development. For future research, it is recommended that structured questionnaires be developed for vocational college instructors and industry employers to help narrow the gap between educational outcomes and workplace expectations.

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