

**THE INFUSION AND ACQUISITION OF SOFT SKILLS
IN REAL ESTATE CURRICULUM**

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UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

DEDICATION

*“Dedicated to my dad, my mom, and family who always encouraged me to go on every adventure, especially this one.
Thank you, and may God bless all of you.”*

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IN REAL ESTATE CURRICULUM

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requirement for the award of the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The rationales cited for the depleted unemployment prospects of public university graduates are that they are deficient in linguistic such as English proficiency in both oral and written, and technical skills, inadequately prepared for the job market, plus cognitive abilities such as problem-solving and analytical thinking. The most-recent initiative or skill bridging measure taken by the Malaysian public universities is to build into the formal curriculum soft skills to produce graduates with diverse abilities. Notwithstanding, there is no extensive attempt to review the integration of soft skills in the real estate program. Therefore, the paper examines the integration and acquisition of the entire range of soft skills embedded in real estate formal coursework and training. A survey method was employed for the study, and structured questionnaires were distributed to the graduates of the real estate program. The data was analysed using Exploratory Factor Analysis. Key finding revealed that, moral and professional ethic skills, and communication skills have been well imparted and acquired via formal coursework. The précis of the analyses signified that, soft skills infused in real estate curriculum have not met the needs of the graduates, with the exemption for a few skills competencies. This is the indication that the assimilation of skills in the real estate curriculum has not been completely realized. Therefore, the study brings to the fore the need for improvement in the teaching-learning process and teaching strategies in real estate curriculum.

ABSTRAK

Rasional prospek pengangguran graduan universiti awam adalah mereka lemah dalam penguasaan bahasa Inggeris termasuklah kemahiran lisan dan bertulis, kemahiran teknikal, kurang persediaan untuk pasaran kerja, serta kebolehan kognitif seperti penyelesaian masalah dan pemikiran analitis. Pendekatan inisiatif bagi mengecilkan jurang kemahiran yang diambil oleh universiti-universiti awam di Malaysia adalah dengan menerapkan kemahiran insaniah kurikulum formal untuk melahirkan graduan yang mempunyai kebolehan yang pelbagai. Meskipun demikian, tidak banyak usaha dijalankan untuk mengkaji semula integrasi kemahiran insaniah dalam program harta tanah. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini mengkaji integrasi dan akuisisi dalam jajaran keseluruhan kemahiran insaniah yang diterapkan dalam kursus harta tanah melalui pengajian formal dan latihan industri. Kaedah kaji selidik telah digunakan untuk penelitian dan soal selidik berstruktur diedarkan kepada graduan program harta tanah. Data dianalisis menggunakan Analisis Faktor Eksplorasi. Penemuan kajian mendedahkan bahawa, kemahiran moral dan etika profesional, dan kemahiran komunikasi telah disampaikan dengan baik dan diperoleh melalui kursus formal. Ringkasan analisis menunjukkan bahawa, kemahiran insaniah yang diterapkan dalam kurikulum harta tanah tidak memenuhi keperluan graduan, dengan pengecualian untuk beberapa kompetensi kemahiran. Ini adalah indikasi bahawa asimilasi kemahiran dalam kurikulum hartanah belum sepenuhnya direalisasikan. Justeru, kajian ini memberikan indikasi dimana penambahbaikan dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran serta strategi pengajaran dalam kurikulum harta tanah perlu dilaksanakan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY AND EXCLUSIVENESS	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLE	xii
LIST OF FIGURE	xiv
LIST OF APPENDICES	xv

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
1	INTRODUCTION	
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	3
	1.3 Objective of Study	5
	1.4 Scope of Study	6
	1.5 Significance of Study	6
	1.6 Limitation of the study	7
	1.7 Method of Study	7
	1.7.2 Theoretical Aspect	7
	1.7.3 Empirical Aspect	8
	1.8 Chapter Layout	9

1.8.1	Chapter 1: Introduction	9
1.8.2	Chapter 2: Real Estate Education	10
1.8.3	Chapter 3: Implementation of Soft Skills in Higher Learning Institution	10
1.8.4	Chapter 4: Research Methodology	10
1.8.5	Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion	10
1.8.6	Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations	11
10.0	Summary	11

2 REAL ESTATE EDUCATION

2.1	Introduction	12
2.2	The Evolution of Real Estate Education	12
2.3	Features of the Malaysian Real Estate Education System	13
2.4	A New Paradigm of Real Estate Education	15
2.5	The Influential Element in Real Estate Education	21
2.5.1	Accreditation bodies	21
2.5.2	Employers	21
2.5.3	Finance	22
2.5.4	Globalisation	23
2.5.5	Information technology advances	24
2.5.6	Local communities and professionals	25
2.5.7	Real estate educators	26
2.5.8	Students	26
2.6	Summary	28

3 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOFT SKILLS IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION

3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Competency and Capability	29
	3.2.1 Competencies Required of Graduates	30
3.3	Soft skills	31
	3.3.1 Communication Skills in English	32
	3.3.2 Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills	33
	3.3.3 Team-Working Skills	35
	3.3.4 Lifelong Learning and Information Management Skills	36
	3.3.5 Entrepreneurial Skills	40
	3.3.6 Moral and Professional Ethics	41
	3.3.7 Leadership Skills	44
3.4	Implementation of soft skills at Malaysian institute of higher learning	46
	3.4.1 Development of soft skills by embedding it in existing courses	46
	3.4.2 Development of soft skills based on support programs	47
	3.4.3 Development of soft skills based on campus life	47
	3.4.4 Development of soft skills at faculty levels	48
	3.4.5 Practical training	48
3.5	The Importance of Soft Skills	48
3.6	Summary	49

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1	Introduction	50
4.2	Framework: Malaysian Model	50
4.3	Questionnaire design and instrument development	53
4.4	Pilot test	59
4.5	Sampling procedure	59
4.6	Data Analysis	61
	4.6.1 Descriptive statistic	61
	4.6.2 Exploratory factor analysis	62
4.7	Summary	64

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1	Introduction	65
5.2	Demographic Profiles of the Respondents	66
	5.2.1 Gender	66
	5.2.2 Ethnicity	67
	5.2.3 Age group	67
	5.2.4 Real estate degree held	68
	5.2.5 Present job related field	69
	5.2.6 Year of experience	70
	5.2.7 Area of industry experience	71
5.3	Soft Skills Embedded in Coursework and Training	72
5.4	Infusion and Acquisition of Soft Skills	76
5.5	Summary	102

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1	Introduction	104
6.2	Remedy and Summary of Research	104
6.3	Limitation	106
6.4	Recommendation	107
6.5	Conclusion	107

BIBLIOGRAPHY	109
Appendices	131

LIST OF TABLE

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
4.1	Soft skill competencies	52
4.2	Questionnaire items for coursework component	54
4.3	Questionnaire items for training component	55
5.1	Descriptive statistics of coursework component	72
5.2	Descriptive statistics of training component	74
5.3	Factor analysis of perceptions on skill embedment through coursework	77
5.4	Factor analysis of perceptions on skill embedment through training	79
5.5	Factor analysis of male graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in coursework	82
5.6	Factor analysis of female graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in coursework	84
5.7	Factor analysis of male graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in training	86
5.8	Factor analysis of female graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in training	88
5.9	Factor analysis of Malay graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in coursework	90
5.10	Factor analysis of non-Malay graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in coursework	91
5.11	Factor analysis of Malay graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in training	94
5.12	Factor analysis of non-Malay graduates' perceptions on skill embedment in training	96

5.13	Factor analysis on skill embedment in coursework based on graduates who had job related to the field	98
5.14	Factor analysis on skill embedment in training based on graduates who had job related to the field	100

LIST OF FIGURE

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
1.1	Flow Chart of Study	9
2.1	Integration of Two Approaches in Real Estate Programme	15
4.1	Model of implementation of soft skills in Institute of Higher Learning	51
4.2	Exploratory factor analysis procedures	63
5.1	Chart of percentage of male and female respondents	66
5.2	Chart of percentage of the respondents by ethnic group	67
5.3	Chart of the percentage of respondents by age categorise	68
5.4	Chart of percentage of the respondents by degree held	68
5.5	Chart of percentage of respondents based on present job related field	69
5.6	Chart of percentage of respondents based on the year of experience.	70
5.7	Chart of percentage of respondents based on area of industry experience	71

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX.	TITLE	PAGE
A	Publication	131
B	Questionnaire	132
C	Exploratory Factor Analysis – Infusion and Acquisition of Soft Skills	135

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Hishamuddin and Buang (2006) review that British system such as real estate laws, taxation and planning has literally influenced the real estate education in Malaysia. As defined by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, British real estate education is based on the planning and development surveying disciplines, and general practice surveying while in the US, the real estate education system was profoundly emphasized on business and financial management. As stated by Rabianski (2003), at least three features or constituent of real estate education which are professional education offered by an assortment of bodies in the real estate industry and on-the-job training, academic or formal education provided by high learning institution such as universities and colleges.

In 2001, Institute of Surveyors Malaysia (ISM) has conducted a survey on graduates in real estate management and found that the performance of real estate graduates was contrary expectation of private organizations and public's perspective. In order to close the gap between the curriculum and the real estate industry, the expectations from the academics and practitioners should be adjusted. Real estate communities have to work collectively in developing the profession from the real estate graduates to the scope of the real estate profession.

Since the recovery of the 1987 recession, real estate industry in Malaysia has changed enormously. The imperative consequence on the real estate industry before the economic crisis was the real estate boom from 1989 to 1996 which elicited the investors to involve in the industry. The real estate market has reached the apex in 1996 ahead of the economic crisis strike the region. The formation of a diminutive real estate unit trusts in 1989 surprisingly could not magnetize the investors to enthusiastically involve in this newly introduced alternative real estate investment. The exclusivity of real estate industry crosswise the province compared to another has affected practitioner expectancy on new graduates in real estate. Formal education is no more a prerequisite to be a real estate professional.

Dasso and Woodward (1981) stressed that little accentuation was positioned upon real estate education. In recent years, growing attention has been focused on real estate education. Therefore, to execute the obligations of Valuation and Real Estate Services Department (VPSD), the main concentration of training in the real estate profession has moved to a wider spectrum. In order to meet the current needs of industry, real estate education needed to be constantly reviewed and reevaluated. It is very important for educators to clarify the requirements of the industry to make sure the training provided is appropriate and proficient at preparing students for the challenges to be faced (Manning, 2002).

Real estate industry is a changing atmosphere with new guiding principles and provisions being introduced recurrently (Judith and Iona, 2003). These days, the continuing change and development of educational programs are important. It is indispensable to get the regular response from student and industry to ensure that the real estate institutions are providing gratification and the best conceivable real estate education. The real estate program is designed to meet the needs of the Valuers Registration Board and industry requirements. Student qualifying with the major may continue into a number of different real estate-related courses such as property valuation, property management, or property development.

1.2 Problem Statement

Today's challenging economic situation, means that, it is no longer adequate for new graduates to have knowledge of an academic subject. It is necessary for a student to acquire skills that will enhance their prospect of employment. The nature of higher education in modern universities and colleges is changing rapidly as institutions consider a number of external factors (Wilson et. al, 2011).

The transition from the world of higher education into the world of work is not always easy. The increase in student passing higher-education system means that, the competition for positions in professions is intense. As consequence, the range and variety of work are becoming progressively diverse. It is a minority of alumnae who are able to get a job which directly utilizes the academic content of their higher-education curriculum. It is also recognized that the curriculum is essentially a medium through which other attributes are transferred. These attributes are fairly constant regardless of the subject matter (Wilson et. al, 2011).

Each of the above standpoints is the major contemplations in the idea of the need for the graduates to be prepared for the world of employment. Higher education, in particular, must provide its graduates with the skills to be able to function professionally within the required for the age of learning that is taking into account the rapid changes in Malaysia due to internationalization of trade, the transition to information society and developments in science and technology and utilizes the education and training to provide a clarification through a mix of formal qualifications and personal skills (Wilson et. al, 2011; Wilson et.al 2012).

There were 67,000 unemployed graduates announced by the Malaysian government and about 92.6 per cent of the unemployed graduates were from public universities, in contrast to only 5.3 per cent graduated of private institution that had graduated between a year of 2000 and 2004. The Malaysian Institute of Economic Research had found the results of a survey on the marketability and employability of university graduates prior to this alarming news, and indicating that in 2003, approximately 46.2 per cent of graduates of public university were unemployed.

The rationales cited for the depleted redundancy prospects of public university graduates are that they are deficient in linguistic such as English proficiency in both verbal and written, technical skills, poorly prepared for the job market, plus cognitive abilities such as problem-solving and analytical thinking (Lim and Normizan, 2004; Chiam, 2005; Norizan et al., 2006; EPU 2007; Marina, 2007).

As some public universities continue using Malay as the medium in curriculum, in particular, the employers remain undecided on the enthusiasm of graduates, predominantly in written and oral communication. Subsequently, the formal curriculum of public universities lacked focus on the assimilation of soft skills in the curriculum (Quek, 2005; Quah et al., 2009).

Issue that had received wide coverage in Malaysia is the employability or marketability of graduates from public universities, and many other countries have also acknowledged that higher education has failed to meet the expectations of employers (Leckey and McGuigan, 1997; Bennett et al., 1999; Kember et al., 2006; Koo et al. 2009).

Outstandingly, in terms of marketability, public university graduates are found lose out to graduates from private universities. The key rationales are the democratization of education in Malaysia depletes national financial resources that lead to a decline in facilities, resources of public institutions, and further result in the decline of standards of public universities, especially the English proficiency of public university graduates (Lie et al., 2009; Sirat Jantan, 2006; World Bank, 2007).

Numerous researches by Weinstein & Worzala “Graduate Real Estate Programs” have reviewed the courses in real estate based on factors such as the characteristics of the program, knowledge and history of education in business schools (Nourse, 1990; Lahey and Webb, 1987; Epley, 1996; Sirmans, 1992; and Weinstein, 1998). Although there were numerous researchers have reviewed the significance of bringing industry professionals into the real estate graduate from level classroom, this study will assess the components in real estate education that can enhance real estate profession and identify the element that should be an important component of the real estate curriculum.

Furthermore, few research in real estate have asked the real estate professionals to figure out what to put in real estate programs to enrich the education for student and real estate practitioners (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverson, 1998; and Weinstein, 2002). Moreover, two articles discovered some perceptivity into the imperative aspects of core competencies and skills in developing real estate syllabus (Musil, 2005; and Galuppo and Worzala, 2004).

This study attempts to answer the five research questions: What the essential skills do graduates feel are required from the curriculum? Do graduates feel they were well-equipped for the workplace by their education? Are these skills and proficiencies being embedded into the real estate curriculum? What skills and proficiencies are taught more often in real estate coursework and industry training? What skills and proficiencies are rarely embedded in real estate coursework and practical training?

1.3 Objective of Study

The objectives of this research comprises of three objectives;

- i. to assess the sufficiency of the soft skills embedded in coursework.
- ii. to assess the sufficiency of the soft skills embedded in an industrial training.
- iii. to remedy the adequacy of the acquisition and infusion of the soft skills perceived by real estate graduates.

1.4 Scope of Study

The study concentrates on the acquisition of soft skills of real estate graduate in the process of teaching and learning provided the initial evidence of the 'Embedded Model'. The research refers to the Malaysian model on implementation soft skills in higher education. Real estate graduates' perceptions concerning the integration of soft skills in this research, therefore examined in the coursework and industrial training separately.

1.5 Significance of Study

The study is conducted to resolve the research question and satisfy the objectives of the study. This research will provide some insight and ideas into the real estate academic on how to close the gap between academics and real estate professionals. Furthermore, this research will reveal the components being embedded into the developed real estate curriculum that can intensify the real estate. In addition, it can expand the ability of student to apply various skill sets and student knowledge so that real estate graduates have an adequate blend of theory and practice. The beneficial outcome of this research can be used by real estate academics and real estate practitioners. Additionally, this study may provide a useful launching pad for further research in this area of interest. The findings from this study are able to provide some form of empirical data for further research.

The motivation of the research is as follows; First, given the recently of this initiative in the Malaysian context, there is no attempt to date to comprehensively review the integration of soft skills of real estate curriculum in both coursework and practical training. Thus, the integration of soft skills remains to be revealed (Economic Planning Unit, 2007). Subsequently, information on the adequacy and the type of skills acquired by graduates would be very valuable input to improve the design and deliverance of real estate curriculum. The study will review and examine the embedment, and the infusion and acquisition of the entire range of soft skills in

real estate curriculum, both formal coursework, and industry training from the graduates' perception.

1.6 Limitation of study

A research will always be limited by a number of obstacles and limitation (Singh *et. al.*, 2006). Resources tend to become an imperative influence when conducting this research. Due to the fact that it concerns with gathering the information through population survey, apparent restriction as time, facilities and funding may come into effect. Discernibly, it suggests the requirement of potential highly cooperative pool of respondents relevant to achieve the objectives. Constraints of resources again such time and funding hamper the number of respondents in this study.

1.7 Method of Study

The flow of study can be classified into theoretical and empirical aspects. Each aspect contains several steps involve in the study process.

1.7.2 Theoretical Aspect

Theoretical aspect is an early part of study that provides the background for study. It essentially involved the identification of problems. The issues of the study should be identified before the study can be performed. The objectives of study are defined specially to address the issues. The scope of study and significance of study should be stated clearly in this stage.

1.7.3 Empirical Aspect

The empirical aspect further focused on how to achieve the objectives of study. It consists of literature review, conduct empirical survey to collect and gather data, analysis and interpretation of data, and finally the researcher recommendations and conclusion.

a. Literature Review

The relevant materials for the literature review are the academic publications that focused on the raising problems and the objectives of study such as journal articles, books, and dissertations. These materials will assist in understanding the background of study from various perspectives.

b. Conduct Empirical Survey

The data related to this study will be collected during this stage in achieving the objectives of the study. Questionnaire and interviews have been selected as the tool to collect the primary data so as to achieve both objectives of the study. The method of data collection will be discussed in the research methodology chapter. In conducting the empirical survey, researcher adopt the probability sampling in ensuring the study more focuses and precise.

c. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

All the data will be analysed and interpreted to attain the objectives of study. The data will be analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Descriptive statistic will be used with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software.

d. Conclusion and Recommendations

A conclusion will be drawn based on the overall analyses outcomes. Recommendation raised from finding will be given for further studies purpose.

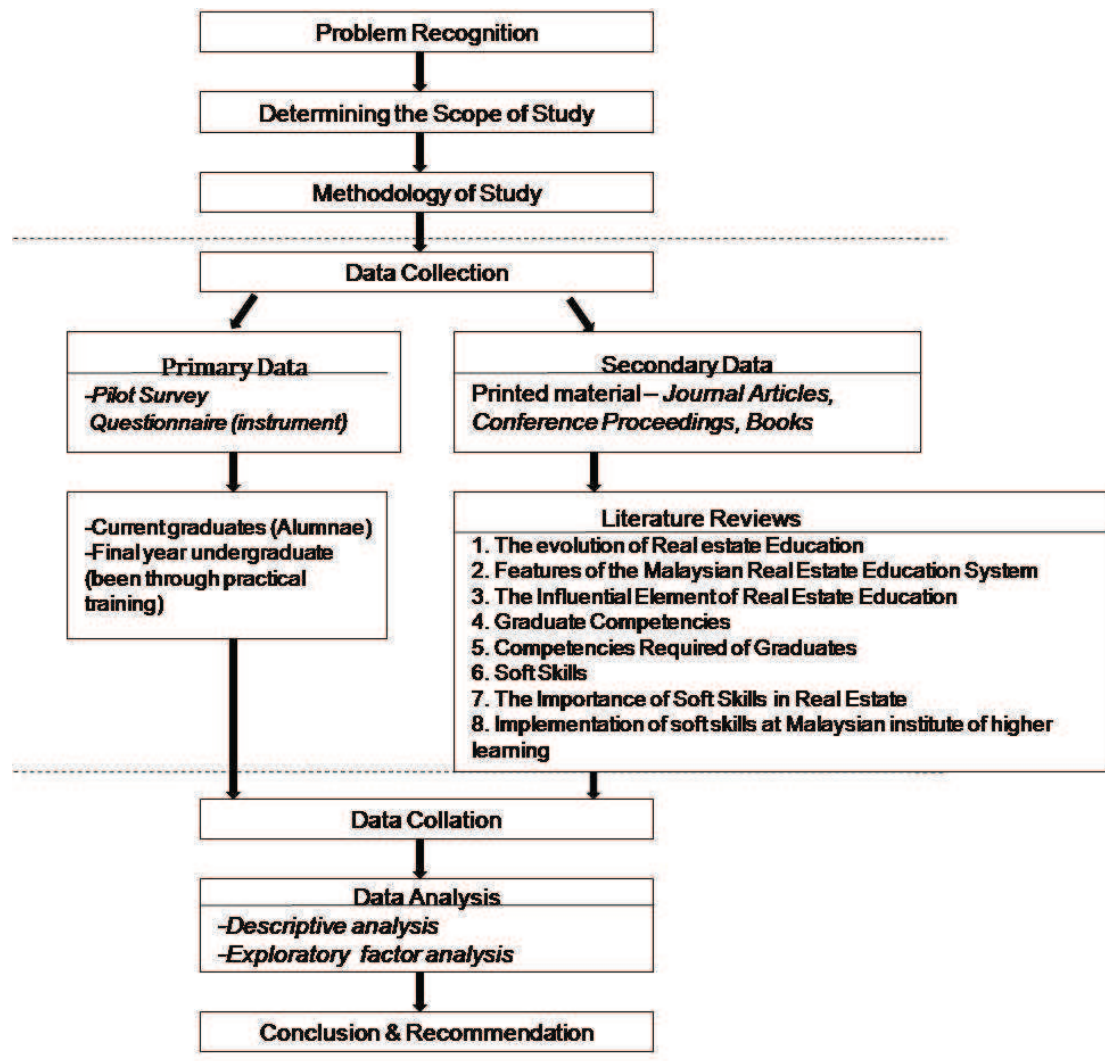


Figure 1.1: Flow Chart of Study

1.8 Chapter Layout

1.8.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter will include the entire research synopsis. An overview of the study covering background information, problems statements, objective of study, scope of study, significance of study, research methodology, chapter layout and expected results.

1.8.2 Chapter 2: Real Estate Education

Chapter 2 comprises of the literature review that is significant to this research. Basically, the literature review acts as a background of study. The real estate educational development, features of the Malaysian real estate education system, the paradigm of real estate education, and the influential element in real estate education will be reviewed.

1.8.3 Chapter 3: Soft skills

Chapter 3 comprises of the literature review that is significant to this research. Basically, the literature review acts as a background of study. The competencies required of graduates, the entire range of soft skills, and the importance of soft skills will be reviewed.

1.8.4 Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Outlines the methodology of this study will be further discussed commencing from literature review to the method of analysis implemented to achieve the objectives of study. It will explain to the reader regarding the instrumentation used to collect primary and secondary data. Moreover, the methods and approaches to analyse the data are also will be explained thoroughly.

1.8.5 Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 4 is dedicates majorly to present the results obtained using research instrument applied in this research study. This chapter will give an overview of the findings of the research.

1.8.6 Chapter 6: Remedy, Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from the analyses in the previous chapter will be revealed. Data and information attained through instrumentation will be used to formulate conclusion necessary for this research. The remedy and conclusion will be derived from the findings. Some recommendations for further studies will be given.

1.9 Summary

The issue has been identified in the early stage of the study. The objectives of the study have been defined especially to address the problems. Furthermore, the scope of study and significance of the study have been stated clearly as the outlines for the study. A brief method of the study was constructed in order to achieve the objectives and purposes of the study.

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