

**A TRACER STUDY ON SULTAN SALAHUDDIN ABDUL AZIZ SHAH POLYTECHNIC'S GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY (2014 – 2018)**

Noreen Nastasha Yusof  
Polytechnic Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah

**ABSTRACT**

An aspect of quality in higher education is the quality of the outcomes achieved. Higher education add value by developing job-related skills and competencies. The purpose of this study was to examine the employability of graduates of Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic from 2014 to 2018. The instrument used was an adopted tracer study questionnaire that was then validated by a pool of experts in the field. The descriptive method was used in the study. The study involved a total of 5968 graduates. Findings indicate that the majority of them are already employed. The results further show that most of the employed graduates are working in private agencies. Further research findings should be conducted on current and future needs of the industries to enhance or improve graduate employability.

**Keywords:** Tracer Study, Skills, Quality

**1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the factors that determine the effectiveness of an academic institution is through the employability of its graduates. The quality of graduates is very much a function (Dr. Mark Irvin C.Celis, 2013). Tracer studies or graduate survey is a means of maintaining curriculum relevance and providing targeted benefits to graduates to enhance the marketability of educational programs. Students, particularly graduates of any course, are required to earn a sense of competence in their field of interest and develop the confidence to explore new possibilities and new employment especially if there is increasing competition among rivals at work. Higher education is a key institution for transforming a country to the aspired level of development. Academic institutions have the responsibility to keep track of the employability of their graduates to determine accountability and whether or not their diploma programs have impacted on the person, the institution or the country (Dr. Roger S Malahay & Petmar M Saing). The alumni are considered as the best proof of a program's effectiveness in term of employment and positions held. (Dr. Roger S Malahay & Petmar M Saing)

Through this study, Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Polytechnic (PSA) would like to substantiate the transfer of skills and knowledge to its graduate students. Tracer studies served as a basis for assessment and enhancement of existing educational programs offered by every academic institution. (Dr. Maria Lourdes D. Cervantes, 2015)

**2. METHODOLOGY**

This survey method was applied in the study. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The survey questionnaires were answered by the respondents through a platform. The questionnaires were sent to 5968 students who had graduated from 2014 to 2018. Table 1 below reveals the distribution of the respondents according to the year they graduated.

**Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to year graduated**

Year Graduated	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2018	779	13.1
2017	993	16.6
2016	1178	19.7
2015	1671	28
2014	1347	22.6
Total	5968	100

The questionnaires consist of respondents' profile, job placement of the respondents and relevance of school related factors to the job placement and skills acquired from their program. The researcher used a platform called as Anjung. It was convenient and fast way for the graduate respondents as they use computers at PSA to solicit their participation in the study. They respond to the questionnaires before their convocation.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Distribution

**Table 2 : Gender of the respondents**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	3158	52.9
Female	2810	47.1
Total	5968	100

As disclosed in Table 2, majority of the respondents are male. This indicates that males are more inclined in polytechnic.

**Table 3 : Employment status of the respondents**

Year Graduated	Employed		Unemployed		Further Study		Total (N)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
2018	688	88.3	13	1.7	78	10	779
2017	573	57.7	138	14	282	28.3	993
2016	717	61	97	8.2	364	30.8	1178
2015	1110	66.4	291	17.4	270	16.2	1671
2014	900	66.8	205	15.2	242	18	1347
Total (N)	3988	66.8	744	12.5	1236	20.7	5968

Table 3 above reveals that majority of the respondents (3988 or 66.8%) were employed while (744 or 12.5%) unemployed and (1236 or 20.7%) further study. This indicative of the high demand for PSA students and it can be concluded that graduates from PSA can easily find a job due to the demands from industries.

**Table 4 : Employment sector of the respondents**

Year	2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Government Agency	88	11.3	77	7.8	82	7	76	4.5	80	5.9
Non-Government Agency	514	66	437	44	558	47.4	884	53	807	60
Further Study	177	22.7	479	48.2	538	45.6	711	42.5	460	34.1
Total	779	100	993	100	1178	100	1671	100	1347	100

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents are currently working with non-government agency followed by further study and the remaining are working for government agency. Most respondents prefer to work with private sectors as it easy to get job rather than government agency whereby they need to wait for long period. It's also indicates that more job vacancies in the private sectors need PSA's students.

**Table 5 : Distribution of respondents in terms of monthly income**

Monthly Salary	RM500 -RM1000	RM1001 -RM1500	RM1501 -RM2000	RM2001 -RM2500	RM2501 -RM3000	RM3001 -RM4000	RM4001 -RM5000	RM5001 -RM10000	Total
2018	242	193	154	54	21	19	3	2	688
2017	60	155	167	95	48	41	4	3	573
2016	96	214	248	100	38	17	3	1	717
2015	197	416	335	103	36	19	3	1	1110
2014	162	392	256	65	14	6	3	2	900
Total	757	1370	1160	417	157	102	16	9	3988

The monthly income distribution received by the respondents is shown in Table 5 above. A closer look at the findings reveal that out of 3988 graduates, only 9 are compensated within RM5,001-RM10,000 from 2014-2018. The range of salary received the most is RM1,501-RM2,000 by 1160. The data also demonstrates that 757 of them received RM500-RM1,000. While 1370 is remunerated with RM1,001-RM1,500. The table also indicates were 417 who received their salary RM2,001-2,500 whereas 157 are given a higher salary between RM2,501-RM3,000. The data also show 102 received RM3,001-RM4000. It could be noted that 16 get the second highest salary where by RM4,001-RM5,000. The data demonstrated a clear variance of monthly income distribution among the 3988 graduates from 2014-2018 and that probably most of these graduates have not been promoted yet to a higher rank thus receiving either a hiring scale for entry level positions or the succeeding rank that is appropriate to those employed within the lower to the middle key positions. This implied that PSA has produced graduates who were either not continuing further advancements in their chosen field or were not given opportunities to get to a higher position in their current employment situation. There are also graduates that get a job after 6 months as they fail in their job hunting such as interview. There also said that excellent oral and written communication skills and functional skills are the factors that affect the employability of graduates. (Dr. Maria Lourdes D. Cervatas, 2015) Communication skills is also important tools in job hunting but the graduates are lack of it.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority of the respondents are gainfully employed and landed a job from one to two years after graduation. Most of them are on contractual basis. Majority are professionals working as a rank and majority are still holding their first job after graduation. Salaries and benefits play a big role in staying or leaving the first job. Communication skills are deemed to be the most useful competencies learned by graduates. Language play an important role in their work.

PSA may encourage the students to be more motivated to work hard and persevere in whatever task and project assigned to them to develop their sense of responsibility and leadership. Their competencies may be further strengthened through exposure to various competitions and other related training and seminars. Students should be encouraged continue to participate in the English Proficiency Programs to further enhance their oral and written communication skills. Work skills and values of PSA students must be further emphasized in the application of the outcomes based curriculum. PSA needs more improvement by evaluating the current curriculum to cater the current and future needs. PSA may encouraged to continue to update and enhance teaching skills through various training programs, whereby can choose partner industries which can provide competent and competitive on the job training skills to the students. PSA must continue to tap linkages that will bring possible employment opportunities for its graduates.

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