

## **Perception of agricultural training institute graduate towards institute facilities**

(Persepsi graduan institut latihan pertanian terhadap kemudahan institut)

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### **Abstract**

Agriculture is the heart of food production. However, the contribution of this sector to GDP is low with only 4.39% in 2020 compared to industrial and service sectors with contributions of 26.33% and 65.73% respectively in the same year. Non-skilled workers are among the factors for the low level of contribution from the agriculture sector. Various training centres have been developed to increase the number of skilled workers. National Agricultural Skills Training Program (PLKPK) is a program under TVET that focuses on skill development in agriculture. A training centre plays a crucial role in influencing trainee's learning. It is a significant element for attracting and influencing or determining students' comfort at an institution. This research is aimed to identify alumni's perception towards the institution's facilities during their study period, as well as to gather ideas for enhancing the institute in future. Data was collected through an online survey focusing on Graduates of *Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia* (SKM) and *Diploma Kemahiran Malaysia* (DKM) from 2015 to 2019. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to discover the underlying structure of observed variables. The study found that excellent and satisfactory infrastructure facilities at the training centre are the main factors for graduates to choose a specific training centre to further their studies. Thus training centres must act in promoting and involving programs with the local community and public to ensure that the centre continues to be known among the public. Appropriate measures can be taken to guarantee students' comfort and safety at the institute.

### **Introduction**

Agricultural development is one of the most powerful tools to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity and feed a projected 9.7 billion people by 2050. Growth in the agriculture sector is two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other sectors (World Bank 2022). However, recent data shows that GDP sharing in the agriculture

sector is lower than in other sectors while agriculture consumes a bigger portion of human resources and funds (Alam 2008). Statistic shows that the global GDP in the agriculture sector contributed 4.39% in 2020 and the value increased by 8.5% compared to the year 2011. The industry and service sectors contributed approximately 26.33% and 65.73% respectively, to the

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global gross domestic product in the year 2020 (Statista 2022). It indicated that the agricultural sector is still far behind compared to the industry and services. In 2021, the agriculture sector in Malaysia contributed 7.1% to the GDP, a slight decrease from 7.4% the year before. In the same year, the value added by the agriculture sector to the GDP was estimated to reach nearly 99 billion Malaysian ringgit (Statista 2022).

There are many reasons for the low level of contribution from the agriculture sector. These are mainly related to the non-skilled workforce, use of low-level and time-consuming technology and conventional cultivation that deserve a revolutionary change (Bryceson 2000; Barrett et al. 2003). Data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022) shows that there is a decrease in the labour force in agriculture by 4%, from 1,614,900 people (2010) to 1,550,000 people (2022). Bruening and Frick (2004) found that companies of today want graduates with cross-cultural experiences; agricultural farms being inclusive. Williams et al. (2002) identified the importance of experimental learning, as such opportunities could introduce students to experiments that could help shape and develop knowledge and skills. Acker (1999) said that students' education should include the development of broad thinking skills to initiate problem-solving skills and further asserted that students need to examine agriculture from a systems perspective, including social, biological and physical systems. Faculties of agriculture and agricultural colleges and universities were first formed in the belief that farm production could be increased as a result of the systematic application of current technology and agricultural research findings (Jamaluddin and Alias 1997).

Through teaching and practice, training is concerned with building knowledge and specialised skills that corresponds to specific practical competencies to the required standard. It is a valuable tool that may put a person in a situation where

they can accomplish their work accurately, successfully and conscientiously. According to Engetou (2017), training increases efficiency and safety in organisational operations. The growth of these training centres is determined by the demands of the existing job sector. The expansion of training centres around Malaysia is an effort by the government for young people to receive practical education and subsequently land in a job. University curriculum could be more effective if focus is placed on professional trainings, that is responsive to the ever-changing demands of various sectors of an economy (Ceniza et al. 2022).

To encourage more people to venture into agriculture with high skills, various institutes have been established to focus on improving skills. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a program that provides training to produce scientists, scholars, skilled and semi-skilled workers to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. The institutions aim to produce TVET graduates to meet the industry demands (Afferro et al. 2020). According to Zain et al. (2017), in fulfilling the desire to increase the economy in the value chain into a high-income economy, Malaysia should increase recruitment at TVET and improve the overall quality of training. Yusop and Umar (2018) identified that TVET can improve self-skills and foster a desire to reform.

National Agricultural Skills Training Program (PLKPK) is a program under TVET that focuses on skill development in the agriculture field. To date, 14 training centres are active in long-term training programs, namely the Malaysian Skills Certificate or Diploma, Agricultural Certificate, Veterinary Certificate and Fisheries Certificate throughout Malaysia. According to Adedapo (2014), teenagers regard agriculture as an exclusive occupation of the impoverished rural sector, which lacks fundamental social amenities like electricity, education and health care

institutes, a strong road network and banking institutions, making it unappealing to reside in. The government's effort in ensuring that the younger generation is active in agriculture should boost the agricultural industry's vibrancy and development. The construction of training centres that provide numerous professions that are still relevant is important to the agricultural industry's growth in terms of delivering quality and trained people capital.

The comfort and facilities of an institute largely influences students' decision to continue their studies at the training centre. According to Johari and Pusphavalli (2010), happiness and pleasant emotions impact an individual's life pattern toward achieving peace. According to Said and Mohd Ali (2010), the physical environment of a campus is a significant element in attracting and influencing or determining students' comfort at an institution. Mustafa et al. (2009) discovered that pupils are disinterested in a class because of the uncomfortable settings. Adebayo and Seow (2012) defines comfort as "a condition of pleasure with something or relief from pain and worry, as well as a state of happiness with something." When students' physical conditions are unpleasant, they are unable to concentrate on the learning process. According to Said and Ahmad (2010), having various amenities and services makes living easier and more comfortable. As a result, in addition, to living in a residential college, the responsible party should complete all facilities in a residential college to assist students in going through their daily life while being in a residential college to pursue knowledge.

Integrating existing scientific research resources, constructing the laboratory and participating in the theoretical and practical theories and techniques involved in the tutor's topic will assist students in combining the gained information in accordance (Hou et al. 2018). This aspect is critical in assisting the government in

improving the atmosphere, modules and infrastructure at the training centre to boost comfort and generate competitive students in the labour market.

### **Methodology**

The study involved 441 participants, with data collected through a structured questionnaire and an online survey. Since the focus of this study is involving agricultural training centres, PLKPK graduates were selected as respondents of the study. The list of PLKPK graduates has been collected from 14 agricultural training centres located throughout Malaysia and graduated from 2015 to 2019. A total of 2,889 graduates have graduated with the Malaysian Skills Certificate (SKM) and Malaysian Skills Diploma (DKM). From this, 15% of the graduates from each training centre were chosen for the study. Thus, 441 graduates consented to participate. The stratified random sampling approach assures that the population's subgroup is represented in the N population.

A structured questionnaire with a few sections was developed. Section A focused on the profile of respondents. This section covers the demographic profile, year of graduation and field of study. Graduate employment information is covered in section B which is related to the current job, income and the relationship between the current job and the field of study. All the questions in these two sections are a construct of closed-end questions. The final section is the graduate's perception of the training centre's facilities and suggestions for future improvement. This section is composed on a five-point Likert scale (1: Completely Disagree; 2: Disagree; 3: Neutral; 4: Agree; 5: Completely Agree).

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to discover the underlying structure of observed variables (Mvududu et al. 2013). Factors that affect the dependent variable from existing data can be obtained by using

EFA analysis (Creswell and Clark 2018). It was used extensively in a vast array of contexts (Costello and Osborne 2005; Basto and Pereira 2012). According to Yong and Pearce (2013), EFA was a useful way to summarise and interpret underlying relationships and patterns in the data. While Fabrigar and Wegener (2012) stated that the researcher has no expectations about the number of common factors or which measured variables will be influenced by the same common factors.

EFA was a data reduction technique used to reduce many variables to a small set of underlying factors that summarise the essential information contained in the variables (Richard et al. 2007). A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted to verify if the data set was suitable for factor analysis. The goal of both tests is to establish the factorability of the matrix or data set by measuring sampling adequacy (Richard et al. 2007). The data set is deemed to be factorable if Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant and the KMO measure is more than 0.50. The correlation coefficient between the variable and the factor is known as factor loading. Factor loading represents the variation explained by the variable on that specific factor and the number must be more than 0.3. To be classified as a single factor, the eigenvalues must be greater than '1'. To determine if the components recovered from this research are reliable or not, the communality value of each item must be within the 0.3 range, as proposed by MacCallum et al. (1999).

## Result and discussion

### *Profile demographic*

Significant findings include elements that impact graduates' perceptions of training centre facilities, as well as measures that should be made to improve the training centre. Research data shows 58% of the respondents were male graduates, while

the remainder were female. At 93.6%, Malay people were the most likely to join this programme and 79.8% were between the ages of 20 and 25. In 2019, 29.7% of students graduated, compared to 28.6% in 2018. Food processing course had the highest proportion of responders (18.6%), followed by ruminant and livestock (15.4%) and Marketing (14.7%). *Table 3* shows the outcome.

Table 3. Demographic profile of the survey (n = 441)

Item	Characteristic	%
Gender	Male	58
	Female	42
Race	Malay	93.6
	Chinese	1.4
	Indian	0.2
	Bumiputra	4.8
Age	<20	2.5
	20 – 25	79.8
	26 – 30	16.6
	>30	1.1
Year of graduation	2015	13.8
	2016	9.3
	2017	18.6
	2018	28.6
	2019	29.7
Field of specialisation	Marine aquaculture	9.5
	Freshwater aquaculture	6.6
	Food processing	18.6
	Marketing	14.7
	Paddy production	7.5
	Poultry livestock	6.3
	Ruminant livestock	15.4
	Capture fisheries technology	9.3
	Crop	12

### **Factor analysis**

The KMO produced a value of 0.948 out of the 14 variables examined, whereas Barlett's test was significant at 0.01 ( $p$ -value = 0.000). The findings suggest that factor analysis can identify the main factors influencing graduates' perceptions of training centre facilities. Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 are regarded as variables influencing graduates' perceptions of the training centre's facilities. The analysis decreased the number of items to 14 and separated them into two factors that explained 72.3% of the variation in the research. This element falls under the category of Infrastructure and Learning Environment.

The first factor, infrastructure, accounts for 64.75% of the overall share. It aims to classify infrastructure as the primary draw for graduates to study at the training centre. Good infrastructure and resources influences effective teaching and learning. Khumalo and Mji (2014) stated that it is considered a critical factor as lack of infrastructure may negatively affect the learning and teaching processes within the classroom. The infrastructure refers to the the availability of hostels, training workshops and pleasant classrooms that assures a safe and conducive atmosphere. These factors were represented by nine variables, seven of which had significant correlation values ( $>0.7$ ). The second factor (Learning Environment) accounts for 7.48% of the total dimension and identifies learning environments such as libraries and teaching aids that are complete and up to date can assist increase their comprehension and abilities, particularly in the topic studied. Some studies indicated the educational environment encountered by students has a significant impact on their behaviour, satisfaction with the course of study, perceived well-being, aspirations and academic achievement (Sharkawy et al. 2013; Miles et al. 2012). This component is represented by five variables, two of which have a strong correlation value of higher than 0.7. (Table 4).

The KMO resulted in a value of 0.960 out of the 14 studied variables, whereas Barlett's test was significant at 0.01 ( $p$ -value = 0.000). The findings indicate that factor analysis can determine the key elements influencing graduates' perceptions towards a training centre and suggestions for future improvement based on recommendations. Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 are considered elements influencing a graduates' perspective. The analysis narrowed down to 14 criterias and further separated into two variables that explained 72.3% of the variation in the research. This element is divided into two categories which are the Promotion of training centre and Program; and Graduate Assistance.

The main factor in developing a training centre is the promotions of the programs offered which accounts for 64.51% . It emphasises the aspects that the institute must address to guarantee that the training centre is well recognised and can attract more students through promotion, programmes and activities for public exposure. According to Jones (2002), to improve and maintain the relationship with the public, open days and social events are necessary and it is practiced by most successful higher education institutions. It creates awareness, develops and maintains positive image of the institute which is a very effective tool in this competitive era (Prashant 2017). The factor was represented by nine variables, seven of which had significant correlation values ( $>0.7$ ). The second element (Graduate Assistance) accounts for 7.85% of the total dimension. It categorises the variables connected to the help graduates throughout their time at the training centre. This includes financial aid and counselling sessions from the institution in building students' skills and self-confidence as they prepare to enter the workforce after completing their studies at the training centre. Five variables represent this factor and three of it gave a high correlation value of more than 0.7 (Table 5).

Table 4. Factors influencing graduate's perception towards facilities at training centres

Item	Factors	
	Infrastructure	Learning environment
A comfortable library for trainees to use		0.899
Library facilities that meets learning needs		0.899
Raw materials and equipment (tools, equipment & materials -TEM) are sufficient		0.613
The teaching aid equipment provided is maintained and functional		0.605
The teaching aid equipment provided is up to date		0.554
The hostel provided has sufficient basic facilities	0.665	
Conducive hostel	0.708	
The safety of the training centre environment is guaranteed	0.821	
Facilities are easily accessible around the training centre	0.721	
Training centre cares about the physical health of trainees	0.843	
Training centre cares about the mental health of trainees	0.779	
Availability of nutritious food	0.571	
Workshop space, laboratory and a conducive training place	0.762	
A conducive classroom	0.842	
Eigenvalue	9.712	1.123
Variance (%)	64.749	7.484
Cumulative (%)	64.749	72.232
KMO		0.948
Bartlett's test of sphericity		0.000

Source: Consumer survey (2020)

### Conclusion and recommendation

Satisfactory infrastructure facilities at a training centre is the main factor for graduates to choose a training centre to further their studies. The facilities include the training centre's hostel, environment and security. The infrastructure is essential for ensuring comfort and safety of students at the training centre. Complete learning facilities, such as libraries, classrooms and teaching equipment, can impact students' choice of training centre. Such learning resources can assist students in obtaining input that can be applied at the workplace.

A study was also conducted on the students' recommendations for introducing the training centres to public. Promotions and programs held together with the local

community and public are among the effort that needs to be taken by the training centre. It is to ensure that the centre continues to be known among the public. Most Malaysians are yet not know the function of such training centres. Promotions and programs with the local community can help raise the popularity of the training centre and encourage people to apply for admission in the training centre. In addition, assistance throughout the training centre in terms of finance, self-motivation and academic guidance would help students learn more about the work field. This gives a good perception and impact to the public on the training centre itself.

This research is necessary to determine graduates' attitudes toward the training

Table 5. Factors for graduate recommendations on training centre's improvement

Item	Factors	
	Promotion and program	Graduate assistance
Graduates require guidance from the training centre after graduation		0.634
Financial constrains are the main problem for graduates not to work in agricultural sector		0.505
Create a program of pride and identity as PLKPK graduates		0.861
Graduates are involved in PLKPK activities and programs		0.858
Recommendation to follow the PLKPK program to the public		0.819
Promotion of admission to PLKPK needs to be more widespread	0.646	
Skills certificate must be recognised by MQA	0.755	
Learning modules need to be added	0.682	
The quality of teaching staff needs to be improved	0.801	
Exposure to the programs offered at training centre needs to be advertised on social media effectively	0.848	
Industry cooperation related to the field to be increased	0.839	
Evidence of success (Agricultural Skills Icon) is announced to the public	0.825	
Alumni are appointed to the assessment panel of the training centre	0.765	
Training centre engages with the local community	0.761	
Eigenvalue	9.032	1.100
Variance (%)	64.513	7.854
Cumulative (%)	64.513	72.368
KMO		0.960
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000

Source: Consumer survey (2020)

centre. Appropriate modifications can be made to guarantee that students' comfort and safety at the institute are ideal. Furthermore, the advancement gained can result in highly qualified graduates who can fulfil the demands of the profession. Sufficient funding can be channelled to strengthen the training centre's infrastructure. The module enhancement requires the participation of industry representatives so that the module meets the demands of employers today.

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### Abstrak

Pertanian adalah nadi pengeluaran makanan. Walau bagaimanapun, sumbangan sektor ini kepada KDNK adalah rendah iaitu hanya 4.39% pada 2020 berbanding dengan sektor perindustrian lain dan perkhidmatan dengan sumbangan masing-masing 26.33% dan 65.73% pada tahun yang sama. Pekerja tidak mahir antara faktor kepada sumbangan yang rendah dalam sektor pertanian. Pelbagai pusat latihan telah dibangunkan untuk menambah bilangan pekerja mahir. Program Latihan Kemahiran Pertanian Kebangsaan (PLKPK) merupakan program di bawah TVET yang memfokuskan kepada pembangunan kemahiran dalam bidang pertanian. Pusat latihan memainkan peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi pembelajaran pelatih. Ia merupakan elemen penting untuk menarik dan mempengaruhi atau menentukan keselesaan pelajar di sesebuah institusi. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti persepsi graduan terhadap kemudahan institusi sepanjang tempoh pengajian mereka, serta mengumpul idea untuk mempertingkatkan institut pada masa hadapan. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan dalam talian yang fokus kepada Graduan Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia (SKM) dan Diploma Kemahiran Malaysia (DKM) dari 2015 hingga 2019. Analisis faktor (EFA) digunakan untuk menemui struktur asas pembolehubah yang diperhatikan. Kajian mendapati kemudahan infrastruktur yang sangat baik dan memuaskan di pusat latihan menjadi faktor utama graduan memilih pusat latihan khusus untuk melanjutkan pelajaran. Oleh itu, pusat latihan perlu bertindak mempromosi dan melibatkan program bersama masyarakat setempat dan orang ramai bagi memastikan pusat tersebut terus dikenali di kalangan orang ramai. Langkah-langkah yang sewajarnya boleh diambil untuk menjamin keselesaan dan keselamatan pelajar di institut tersebut.

