

A COMPELLING STUDY ON THE CORRESPONDING SALARIES RATES OF MALAYSIAN POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES CASE STUDY: POLITEKNIK TUANKU SULTANAH BAHYIAH

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Abstract

The Polytechnic is an institution that grants diplomas to graduates. According to the Graduates Tracking System Report 2022, the employment rate for Polytechnic Malaysia is 96.2%, indicating a high demand in the job market. The objective of this study is to identify whether polytechnic graduates work according to their study field and to identify whether the salary is paid according to the appropriate rate. The research methodology used involves a combination of questionnaires and case studies, called the triangulation method. Data had been collected from Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah (PTSB). The indicators used in this study are the minimum wage and Malaysian Skill Diploma Level 4. Hence, the Malaysian Skill Diploma Level 4 is the ideal salary equivalent to the Diploma Polytechnic Malaysia. In 2022, 95.4% of the graduates from PTSB are employed. According to the studies, 53.7% of graduates work in their fields. Approximately 24.8% of Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah graduates earned salaries below the minimum wage. The PTSB graduates received an ideal salary of about 34.8%. The value is not much different from the findings obtained from the 2022 TVET Graduate Tracking Report which is 39.7% get below the minimum wage while the graduates who got the ideal wage is 22.2%. In conclusion, all graduates should be paid a salary commensurate with their qualifications and according to the established guidelines and should not be paid below the minimum wage level.

Keywords: *Polytechnic; minimum wage; Malaysian Skill Diploma (Level 4); Graduation Employability*

INTRODUCTION

Polytechnic is Malaysia's leading TVET higher education institution, with 36 polytechnics nationwide, including Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah (PTSB). These institutions produce graduates in engineering (Civil, Mechanical, and Electrical) and commerce. PTSB is the 16th polytechnic out of the 36 in Malaysia. PTSB began its operations in 2002 at Politeknik Seberang Perai (PSP) before moving to its permanent campus in Kulim Hi-Tech Park in 2003. The area of PTSB is 100 acres which can accommodate about 4500 students at one time. Polytechnic diploma students need to complete their studies within 3 years before graduating (PTSB, 2019).

There are three categories of polytechnics namely Premier Polytechnics, Conventional Polytechnics and Metro Polytechnics. Conventional polytechnics offer only diploma-level

studies and have fewer courses than Premier Polytechnics. The Premier Polytechnic offers diploma level and degree level. There are 25 Conventional Polytechnics throughout Malaysia including Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah. Next is Metro Polytechnic. It is a smaller-scale polytechnic compared to Premier Polytechnic and Conventional Polytechnic. The courses offered are also few. Metro Polytechnic was established to meet the local socio-economic needs in certain fields, especially for the increasing needs of the service industries, either at the level of small and medium Industries (SMEs) or multinational companies. (UPU, 2023).

However, the Graduate Tracking System (SKPG) is a platform developed by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) to collect and analyze nationwide graduation data from public universities and higher education institutions. All graduated students are required to answer all the questions in the Graduate Tracking System (SKPG) before the convocation event. The SKPG data also covers the marketability rate of graduates, the rate of employed graduates, the rate of unemployed graduates, the rate of graduates continuing their education, and the rate of graduates improving their skills. It also includes data on graduates' employment according to their field of study and their earned salary rates (Graduate Tracking Study Report, 2022). This study it is focuses on the marketability of graduates based on courses offered by the polytechnic, the percentage of graduates that work according to their study, the percentage of graduates that earned their salary in the range of their qualification, and the reasonableness of the salary rate given. The data from the Graduate Tracking System (SKPG) was used in this study as a comparison and reference. Based on the National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012-2017, employability means the ability to be marketed in the industry. Hence, the Graduates' employability refers to the ability of the graduates to effectively market themselves in the job market and compete based on industry needs after completing the study. The graduate can get a job and maintain appropriate employment. The measurement of the employability rate indicates the capacity of the higher education ecosystem to produce quality graduates and meet the workforce demand from the industry. Table 1 below portrays Polytechnic's graduation employability from 2018 to 2022.

Table 1: Graduate Employability for Polytechnic Malaysia 2018-2022

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Percentage of Graduate Employability	96.1%	96.7%	91.4%	93.7%	96.2%

Sources: Graduate Tracking Study Report 2018-2022

The graduate employability of Polytechnic Malaysia shows a good trend. Table 1 above shows the average graduation employability for Polytechnic Malaysia is 94.8%. But the most important indicator is the percentage of graduates that got a job according to their study field. Table 2 below shows the percentage of graduate employability for Polytechnic Malaysia from 2018 until 2022 that hired for a job.

Table 2: Employed Graduates for Polytechnic Malaysia 2018-2022

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Percentage of employed graduates	83.9%	81.2%	69.2%	71.1%	75.2%
Numbers of graduates	28 685	29127	28532	26507	26728

Sources: Graduate Tracking Study Report 2018-2022

Table 2 above portrays the job placement rate for graduates from Polytechnic Malaysia as very high, with over 75% of graduates finding employment after completing their studies and working according to their studies. However, it's important to note that the salaries of these graduates are payable according to their academic qualifications or otherwise. Scenario in Malaysia, the payment of salary rate is based on qualification. There are also other criteria such as skill and working experience. Normally for both stated criteria, extra fees will be payable. According to Nor Shela Saleh and Mohd Shafie Rosli (2019), the credibility of human skills, knowledge, and behavior is often evaluated and discriminated against by employers and top managers during the selection process. To evaluate whether the salary being paid to graduates from Polytechnic Malaysia is appropriate, the minimum wage and salary payable rate for the Malaysian Skills Diploma (Level 4) are used as indicators for evaluation. The salary earned by graduates from Polytechnic Malaysia should not be less than the minimum wage and should fall within the range of salaries paid to Malaysian Skills Diploma (Level 4) holders. Minimum wages have been defined as the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wage earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by a collective agreement or an individual contract (Dube & Lindner, 2021) According to Vally Senasi and Samihah Khalil, (2015); Kaviyarasu Elangkovan, (2012), minimum wages (MW) defines as the lowest hourly, daily or monthly remuneration that employers legally pay to workers and it is the lowest wage for the use of labor force.

The minimum wage in Malaysia was gazette on 16 July 2012 and implemented on 1 January 2013. The Minimum Wage Order requires employers to have six employees and above with a minimum salary of RM1000 per month in Peninsular Malaysia or RM920 per month in Sabah, Sarawak, and the Federal Territory of Labuan (Consultative Council National Salary, 2012). The implementation of the minimum wage was revised in the years 2020 and 2022. In 2020, the minimum wage was raised from RM1000 to RM1200. The Minimum Wage Order (MWO) effective on 1st May 2022, increasing the national monthly Minimum Wage from RM1,200 to RM1,500 (Bar Council Malaysia, 2022; Richard Seow Yeaw Chong, 2023). The minimum wage used in this study is RM1500.

This study also refers to Malaysian Skills Diploma which also has been used as an indicator. According to Noor Amizan Abd Rahman., Rizza Abas., and Mohd Sharmizi Abu Bakar (2017), stated that Malaysian Skill Diploma holders have payable in the range of RM 1600 to RM2000. According to the Ministry of Human Resources (2020), the starting basic wage for the Malaysian Skills Diploma (Level 4) is RM2020. Hence, the starting basic wage for a Malaysian Skills Certificate (Level 3) is RM1700. The basic wage for the Malaysian Skills Diploma (Level 4) that was utilized in this study is RM2020. Table 3 below shows the Salary Scale For Malaysian Skills Certificates and Diplomas.

Table 3: Salary Scale For Malaysian Skills Certificate and Diploma

Skill Level	Starting Basic Wages
Malaysian Skill Certificate L1	RM1330.00 + a

Malaysian Skill Certificate L2	RM1450.00 + a
Malaysian Skill Certificate L3	RM1700.00 + a
Malaysian Skill Diploma L4	RM2020.00 + a
Malaysian Skill Advanced Diploma L5	RM2460.00 + a

a- Additional value to the starting basic wages that cover additional licenses or competency certificates

Sources: Ministry of Human Resources,2020

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to methods that are used to obtain data and analyze the data. Ang Kean Hua (2016), stated that research methodology is the method used to collect data through effective procedures for answering the research objective. Based on Creswell, J (2014), also states that research methodology is a research approach that involves selecting specific and suitable methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to answer the research objective. In this study, the method used is quantitative and qualitative data known as the mixed method. There are two methods used which are questionnaires and case studies. The selection of this method is according to the objectives of the study which required data in a broad and focused scope for a specific group. Referring to Fellows, R. and Liu, A. (2015), state that the use of question-based methods such as questionnaires, case studies, and interviews, are different in terms of scope and study details.

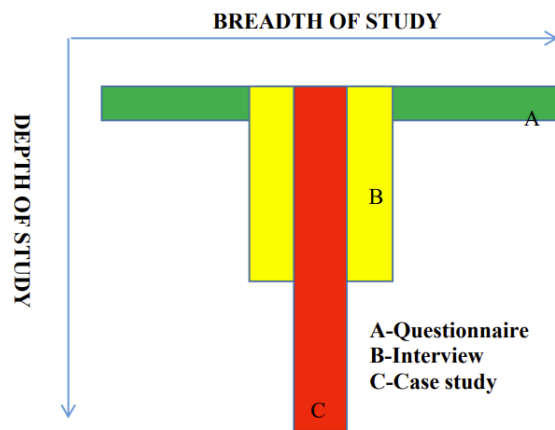


Figure 1: Breadth and Depth of ‘Question-Based’ Triangulation Method
(Sources: Fellows & Liu, 2015)

Figure 1 shows evidence that the questionnaire method provides a broad scope for research, covering many aspects but with minimal detail. The interview method offers a very specific, detailed, and wide scope for the study. If the case study method is used, the scope of the studies is moderately broad and moderate in terms of the depth of the study's details. Therefore, the results obtained are more precise and accurate using a combination of two or three methods mentioned above (Jasmi, K. A., 2012).

In this study, the questionnaire used is an adaptation from SKPG TVET. Therefore, the

questionnaire used in this study is acceptable in terms of validity and trustworthiness. Respondents in this study are PTSB graduates in the year 2022. The number of respondents involved is 1044 out of 1110 graduates or 94.9%. Furthermore, the data in this study consists of two types of data: primary and secondary. The primary data is through a questionnaire and the secondary data is acquired from Graduate Tracking Reports by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia in 2021 and 2022. This secondary data is used to compare to primary data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained by the research method chosen aim to achieve the objective of the study. Table 4 below shows the findings of studies obtained based on primary data and secondary data.

Table 4: Graduate Employability for Polytechnic Malaysia and PTSB

Institutions	*Polytechnic Malaysia	*Polytechnic Malaysia	**PTSB
Years	2021	2022	2022
Numbers of Graduate	26507	26728	1110
Percentage Graduate Employability	93.7%	96.2%	95.4%
Percentage of Graduate employment	71.1%	75.2%	77%

*Secondary Data

**Primary Data

Table 4 above shows that over 75% of polytechnic graduates have been employed. However, the data only pertains to the number of graduates employed without specifying the field of work. In the case of PTSB, only 1044 out of 1110 respondents participated in the Graduate Tracking System (SKPG) TVET. The number of graduates that have been employed is 804 and out of them only 432 working according to their field. Table 5 below portrays the data on graduation employability for PTSB in 2022.

Table 5: Graduate Employability for PTSB in 2022

Graduate Employability	Item	Nos	Percentage
	Work	804	77%
	Further study	188	18%
	Improve Skill	1	0.1%
	Waiting for job placement	3	0.3%
	Not yet working	48	4.6%
Working	Work in field	432	53.7%
Placement	Not in field	372	46.3%

Based on Table 5 above shows that about 53.7% of graduates from PTSB work according to their study and about 46.3% work not in their field. The percentage of graduation employability for PTSB for the year 2022 is 95.4%. Table 6 shows the PTSB graduates employed by courses. Referring to the table, most of the courses offered by PTSB have a good employability rate. The percentage of graduates from PTSB had been employed is more than 60% for the entire course that is offered at PTSB.

Table 6 : Graduate Employed by Courses Offered by PTSB 2022

Courses	Percentage
Diploma in Mechatronic Engineering	65.5%
Diploma in Business Study	70.5%
Diploma in Accountancy	78.4%
Diploma in Marketing	89.5%
Diploma in Geomatic	90%
Diploma in Mechanical Engineering	68.6%
Diploma in Electric and Electronic Engineering	67.1%
Diploma in Electronic (Communication)	85%
Diploma in Civil Engineering	78.6%
Diploma in Electric Engineering	88.1%
Diploma in Electronic (Computer)	63%
Diploma in Mechanical (Manufacturing)	85%

Furthermore, the data on salary earned by graduates from Polytechnic Malaysia. The data also can be divided into two. The secondary data is taken from the Graduate Tracking System (SKPG) TVET Report 2022 by MOHE. However, the primary data is from SKPG TVET PTSB 2022. Table 7 below shows the distribution of salary gained by graduates of Polytechnic Malaysia 2022.

Table 7: Distribution of Salary Gained by Graduates of Polytechnic Malaysia 2022.

Level of study	Numbers of Graduate	Percentage				
		<RM1000	RM1001- RM1500	RM1501- RM2000	RM2001- RM2500	RM2501- RM3000
Diploma	17474	7.8	31.9	38.1	13.1	5.3
Certificate	69	26.1	42.0	24.6	4.3	1.4

Level of study	Numbers of Graduate	Percentage			
		RM3001- RM4000	RM4001- RM5000	RM5001- RM10000	>RM10000
Diploma	17474	2.5	0.6	0.6	0.1
Certificate	69	-	-	-	1.4

According to Table 7, about 39.7%, of the diploma holders from Polytechnic Malaysia have been paid below the minimum wage. However, about 68.1% of certificate holders pay over the minimum wage. The graduate from the polytechnic must be paid equal or more than minimum wage. It is because the graduate from Polytechnic Malaysia had an SPM qualification as a basic qualification plus skill and has a diploma or certificate holder. If refer to Table 3, the graduate from Polytechnic Malaysia should be paid in the range of RM1700 for the certificate holder and RM2030 for the diploma. Based on table 8 shows that 22.2% of diploma holders from Polytechnic Malaysia earned a salary matching their qualifications. Furthermore, approximately 31.7% of certificate holders earned a salary equivalent to their qualifications. Table 8 shows the distributions of salary gain by graduates from PTSB for diploma holders.

Table 8: Distribution of Salary Gained by Graduate from PTSB 2022

Salary	Number of Graduate /Respondent	Percentage
<RM1000	32	4
RM1001-RM1500	167	20.8
RM1501-RM2000	325	40.4
RM2001-RM2500	165	20.5
RM2501-RM3000	58	7.2
RM3001-RM4000	40	5.0
RM4001-RM5000	6	0.7
RM5001-RM10000	7	0.9
>RM10000	4	0.5

Referring to Table 8, 193 graduates obtained a salary less than minimum wage and the rest of them obtained more. Out of 804 graduates involved in the survey, 432 graduate worked according to their field of study. However, only 278 graduates obtained a salary equal to their qualification as stated by the Ministry of Human Resources for diploma holders (Table 3). The finding of graduate employability and salary gained by PTSB graduates have a significant result if compared to graduates from Polytechnic Malaysia. Figure 2 below portrays the timeline diagram of MSD L4 compared to minimum wage. The salary scale for SPM graduates refers to Grade 19 in the Public Service Commission Malaysia (SPA) year 2024.

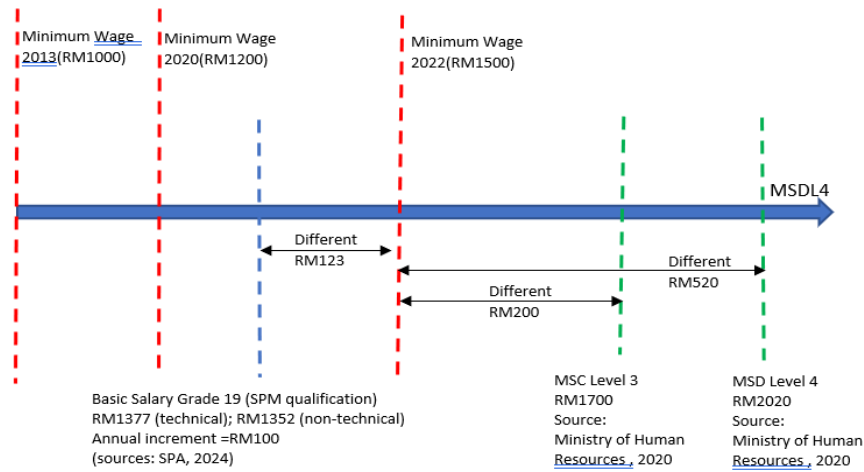


Figure 2: Timeline Diagram of MSC L3 and MSD L4 Compared to Minimum Wage and SPM Salary.

Based on Figure 2 above, the minimum wage increased by about RM 500 from the early implementation in 2013. The difference in salary between MSD L4 (Diploma Holder) compare to minimum wage is become more less. It is about RM520 when the minimum wage increase from RM1200 in the year 2020 to RM1500 in year 2022. The minimum wage is also more higher than salary that gained by SPM holder. It is about RM123. These make the workers feel that the qualification is not very important. They can get a good salary with minimal qualifications. Based on that situation the salary for SPM holders, certificate holders, and diploma holders must be revised to congruent with the increment of minimum wage. According to Mohd Rizan (2023), the Secretary General of the National Organization of Skilled Workers (PKPB) recommended that the wages of workers with MSC Level 1-2 be raised to RM1800, MSC Level 3 be raised to RM2000 and workers with MSD level 4 be raised to RM2300. The Diploma and certificate Polytechnic Malaysia holder also should be paid at the same value. This is aimed at reducing the financial burden on workers and apart from that to appreciate workers who have skills. The extra salary given to workers with a skill certificate will encourage them to improve their skills and qualifications. This indirectly helps the country to produce more skilled workers and thus can improve the quality of the country's human capital.

CONCLUSION

The salary payment rate to Diploma Polytechnic Malaysia holders must be equal to MSD Level 4. This is because the graduates from Polytechnic Malaysia have a diploma qualification and skills. The basic salary paid to any level of workers must be not less than minimum wage. According to Ghee, T. C., Mooi, S. K., & Sang, M. L. M. (2015), the Minimum Wage Policy was introduced in 2013 to meet basic needs and enhance the social security of workers, improve productivity via moving from labor-intensive to capital-intensive structure, and reduce dependency on unskilled foreign labors. This will encourage the involvement of local workers in the national labor market including TVET graduates. The employer must respect and appreciate the qualifications and skills that workers have. In the industrial sector,

there is a lack of skilled workers. To overcome this problem, the industry hires many foreigners who may be paid at a lower wage rate. The action that needs to be taken by the government is to comprehensively enforce the minimum wage to pre-caution the well-being of workers across all employment levels. According to Liew Chin Tong, Deputy Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, (2024), the low salary offer is the cause of the lack of local skilled workers, especially among higher education graduates even though the demand from the industry has increased. The Khazanah Research Institute (2024), also stated that wage growth has been stagnant over the past decade, with two-thirds of fresh graduates still trapped in a low-wage level (earning a starting pay of less than RM2,000) despite higher education attainment. This issue might be one of the causes of the lack of students in the TVET field, especially in engineering. Therefore, the granting of salary rates to TVET graduates needs to be reviewed.

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