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YOUTH'S MOTIVATION TOWARDS A CAREER IN MALAYSIAN OIL PALM PLANTATION

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ABSTRACT

Job creation among youth is an often debated issue in many countries, including Malaysia. Nowadays, despite the rising unemployment rate, there is a shortage of manpower in certain sectors, especially the oil palm plantation sector. It raises the question of whether or not the youth are interested in working in this sector. A comprehensive study was conducted to answer this question. Along with it, this study also surveyed youth's opinions on the factors that can motivate them to build a career in the oil palm plantation sector. A total of 724 youth in Malaysia were employed as respondents for this study and SmartPLS software was used to analyse the study data. The results found that youth still have the interest in getting involved in the oil palm plantation sector. The main motivators for their involvement are family, friends and society, followed by health and economic factors. The findings of this study are in line with the formation of the job selection theory developed in the early 1950s, in which family members play an important role in cultivating job interest. This indicates that the family plays a vital role in encouraging youth involvement in the oil palm plantations. Besides, to ensure their participation in the oil palm plantation sector, policymakers have to think of approaches to improve health and economic standards.

Keywords: career, motivation, oil palm plantation, SmartPLS, youth.

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INTRODUCTION

The oil palm plantation sector is one of the most important sectors in Malaysia. This sector is one of the largest contributors to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and this makes the agricultural industry the third most important industry in the Malaysian economy (DOSM, 2022). The palm oil industry is also over 100 years old and Malaysia is the world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil after Indonesia (Ahmad *et al*., 2012). Oil palm plantations are often considered primary input producers because they are a vital source of raw material for the production of palm oil and its derivatives. Palm oil is one of the most widely used vegetable oils in the world and has a wide range of applications in various industries, including food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and biofuels.

In addition, the development of the world food industry has further boosted the demand for the oil and fats industry, including palm oil globally (Rashid, 2018). The satisfactory growth in the oil palm industry can bring great benefits to the country. This is because it can provide various employment opportunities at various levels in the oil palm industry ecosystem, which includes the upstream, midstream and downstream sectors (Sahbuiddin *et al*., 2021). The upstream sector involves plantation activities such as the production of germinated seeds, seedlings, fresh fruit bunches and other agricultural inputs such as fertilisers. The midstream sector consists of the processing and manufacturing sectors (crude palm oil production), and new product research; while the downstream sector consists of final processes involving other manufacturing sectors and low-

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value-added products to meet the demand for food as well as energy resources (MPOB, 2020). All three of these activities require the workforce to carry out the various tasks involved in each stage. Hence, the impact of this sector has opened more employment opportunities to the people of this country, especially the youth. However, the things youth take into account such as labour rights, fair wages, and safe working conditions are important considerations within the industry's labour dynamics. If wages and benefits in the palm oil sector are not competitive compared to other industries or urban areas, it can make these jobs less appealing to young people. Likewise, young workers may lack proper training and protective equipment, exposing them to health and safety risks. In addition, remote locations, and limited access to modern amenities like internet and telephone lines can discourage young people from getting involved in the palm oil industry. These challenges can make the work environment less attractive and more difficult for young individuals.

Therefore, the development of human capital also known as human resource development is important for the future growth of the country. Youth are an important asset in every country because they are the group needed to govern and develop the country in the future (Yunus, 2007). However, the issue of unemployment among youth is becoming more serious as many of them especially graduates cannot get a job after six months of graduation (Alkatheri and Abdullah, 2019).

Despite the unemployment, certain sectors are experiencing labour shortages, especially the agricultural sector which is difficult for the youth to fill. This causes foreign workers from countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh and India being employed in this sector. The latest data showed that in 2022, there were 391 000 workers employed in the oil palm plantation sector. Out of the total, 74% were foreigners, mostly Indonesians (New Straits Times, 2022). However, the recruitment of foreign labour is a temporary solution to the problems faced.

The vacancies that exist in the agriculture sector, especially in the oil palm plantation sector should be filled by the unemployed (Bernama, 2020), especially the youth. However, the extent to which these young people are interested in the oil palm plantation sector is still not clear. This is because most of them are quite sceptical towards jobs classified as 3D jobs (Dirty-Dangerous-Difficult) (Mohamed *et al*., 2019). The challenge of attracting unemployed youth, who often hold reservations about jobs categorised as 3D jobs like those in the oil palm plantation sector, is a significant concern for the agriculture industry. Other than that, the lack of knowledge and skills development programs can make it difficult for young individuals to enter these roles (Saad, 2016). According to Abdullah *et al*. (2016), attraction for youth participation in the plantation sector includes improvement of the working environment, job status, facility and benefit in the plantation field. Addressing this issue requires a strategic approach that emphasises the potential benefits and opportunities within the sector while also addressing the concerns and perceptions that discourage youth from considering these opportunities.

Graduates or young people are not spared from making choices in their careers (Che Yaacob and Ramli, 2004). Proper and accurate selection of relevant jobs or occupations by graduates or job applicants is very critical as it determines their purpose as job incumbents. Moreover, job incumbents or employees who are clear with their "purposeful missions" tend to be more involved and engaged with their work (Charles and Florah, 2021). It is one of the most important processes in one's life when one begins to think of entering the working world. Locke and Schattke (2019) argued that job selection must be in line with an individual's desires and interests. A job done without interest will cause boredom and affect the quality of work done (Danckert and Eastwood, 2020).

The foundation of a career or job selection is formed by several elements. The job selection theory founded by Anne Roe and Siegelman (1964) concludes that humans tend to improve their self-efficacy to achieve a good career, and parental upbringing strongly influences their career choices and lifestyles. In fact, this theory is based on the hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow (1943), which will be discussed further in the next section. Roe's theory was later updated by Anne Roe and Siegelman (1964) and contains three components namely; i) generic background influences, ii) psychology, and iii) genetics and hierarchy of needs.

Whether individuals remain with their choices or not depends on several other theories as explained by Ginzbery (1989), namely: i) accidental theory, whereby individuals accidentally or intentionally enter the career as a result of an event, pressure, influence or by chance. b) Impulse theory, which is based on feelings or emotions towards a career seen, read, researched, or experienced by other individuals who are significant to them. c) Vocational guidance refers to career information found from vouchers, handouts or career counselors.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify whether there is still interest among youth and the factors that stimulate their interest in being involved in the oil palm plantation sector. Studies on these stimulating factors are important so that the objectives of policies and strategies planned for this group can be met, and this could directly attract them to be involved in the oil palm

plantation sector. The discussion continues with a theoretical explanation related to job or career selection. Then, a review of studies conducted by previous researchers in the oil palm plantation sector in Malaysia is presented. This is followed by the methodology, results and conclusion of the study. This study is based on Maslow's theory (Maslow, 1943) which emphasises the basic needs of employees as an important factor in attracting them to certain job. Youth basic needs must be met before working in the oil palm industry.

Stimulating Factors of Job Selection and Literature Review

The basic needs of employees are an important factor in attracting them to be in a job. Basic needs are needs that must be met prior to other needs (Maslow, 1943). Generally, Maslow's theory relates to human survival. Stum (2001) stated that the motivation for basic needs is the main motive for individuals choosing a job, which is based on two main parts; economic and non-economic. From an economic perspective, the motivation for basic needs means that individuals view employment in terms of the salary offered by the employer (Yuhong and Johnes 2003). Most people will mention that salary is a major factor to look at when applying for a job. This means that the higher the wage, the more individuals want the job (Brown and Medoff, 1989). In fact, according to Meyerding (2018), young people will usually immediately reject an offer if the salary offered is below expectations. Furthermore, the wage factor has a positive relationship with the involvement of rural youth in the oil palm plantation industry. The results of the study by Ayob *et al*. (2015) showed that one of the reasons why youth do not get involved in the oil palm plantation industry is because the salary is low. This minimum wage level ultimately affects unemployment among youth (Gorry, 2013). Wages and benefits need to be balanced to satisfy the wants of employees and to keep them competitive (Chiu *et al*., 2002). Abdullah *et al*. (2016) argued that the unfavourable monthly salaries in the oil palm plantation sector have caused difficulties among the employees in applying for loans and obtaining facilities offered by banking institutions. This is because salary is an important element in approving a financial loan in addition to several other factors. As jobs in this sector are more challenging and categorised under the 3D sector, the salary offered needs to reflect the job's difficulty and hazards (Kamaruddin *et al*., 2018).

In addition, job selection also depends on job prospects. This is related to the future of the job such as promotion opportunities, salary increments, and so on. According to Meyerding (2018), the perception of the future is the most important feature in choosing a job in the agricultural field. Ko and Jun (2015) empirically demonstrated that a high salary is an important factor that motivates university students to enter the public sector. Students also choose to work in the public sector because of the higher social benefits compared to the private sector (Molnár and Kapitány, 2014). This situation is different in the agricultural sector. Malaysians think that the agricultural industry is an industry that pays low wages and does not provide a bright future. Meanwhile, basic needs from a non-economic perspective are seen in terms of environmental health as well as security and safety (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Involvement in oil palm plantations is an agricultural activity that is largely outdoor activity. According to a study conducted by Hofmann *et al*. (2009), the health of those working in the agricultural sector will be affected due to exposure to sunlight and the physical strength needed.

Environmental factors have their own definition, which is everything that is around us (Arthur and Lawrence, 1984). It relates to the job suitability factor, in which this factor is very important to one's job selection (Savickas and Porfeli, 2011). This is because, the workplace environment is a factor that is often beyond the control of individuals such as floods and natural disasters; and it affects economic and career conditions. Thus, it is very important that the job seekers identify suitability as a critical factor before venturing into a job (Hofmann *et al*., 2009). Similarly, the issue of occupational safety is an important aspect especially in high-risk work. Safety issues are accidents that workers are aware of as well as those they are not aware of. Tripathi *et al.* (2019) stated that job security is the most important factor in career choice for youth. This situation clearly illustrates that youth desire jobs that are of the lowest risk.

Next, family members also play a role in influencing or determining a youth's career choices. Raychaudhuri and Jana (2016) stated that family background could be influential in career decision-making. Meanwhile, a study by Mukembo *et al*. (2014) found that parents are the most influential career guides for youth. This means parents have greater influence over their children.

All the factors discussed are important factors influencing job selection among job seekers. Therefore, to encourage the specific involvement of young people, these factors need to be given attention and priority in formulating employment-related policies. Fostering interest in working in the agricultural sector, especially oil palm, is also important.

A study about Malaysian youth working in the oil palm plantation sector was conducted by Kamaruddin *et al.* (2018). The study discovered that job satisfaction among Malaysian youth is influenced positively by economic profitability

offered, government or employer's policy and social facilities provided by employer; and negatively influenced by working environment factor and perception of social job status toward this occupation. However, their study did not take into account the role of family, peers, society and health in influencing youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector. According to Mukembo *et al.* (2014) parents play a role in cultivating interest and guiding their children's career choices. Meanwhile, health is the primary consideration for young people when choosing a career (Tripathi *et al.*, 2019).

Hence, this study investigates the economic factor, job prospects, health factor, environmental factors, safety factor and family factor that might influence youth involvement in career in oil palm plantation. *Figure 1* presents the research model of factors of involvement in the oil palm industry.

We proposed the following hypothesis for this study:

Hypothesis 1: The economic factor is positively related to youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector.

Hypothesis 2: The health factor is positively related to youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector.

Hypothesis 3: The environment factor is positively related to youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector.

Hypothesis 4: The safety factor is positively related to youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector.

Hypothesis 5: The family factor is positively related to youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Peninsular Malaysia involving five zones; northern, central, southern, and eastern zones; as well as Sabah and Sarawak representing East Malaysia. Sample selection was done by strata sampling. Determination of the minimum sample size according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) where the population size is 14 990 900 people (DOSM, 2021), the chi-square value is 3.841, the population proportion (Confident interval) is 0.5 (95%), and estimation error is 0.05. Hence, the minimum sample size is 385. Meanwhile, the minimum sample for the northern is 76, central is 100, southern is 67, and eastern zones is 86. A total of 739 respondents were involved in this study. Of these, only 724 respondents could be used. This figure is determined based on the justification that the number is considered sufficient (Memon *et al.*, 2020) to represent the population by zone (*Table 1*).

Study Instrument

This study used a questionnaire as its research instrument. The questionnaire of this study contains three main parts; demographics, stimulating factors of involvement in the oil palm industry, and readiness proxied by youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector. The demographics of the respondents consisted of gender, age, race, status, occupation, education level, place of residence, and involvement in the oil palm sector.

Methods of Analysis

The study used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for descriptive statistical tests covering frequency, mean, percentage and standard deviation. Meanwhile, the analysis of the

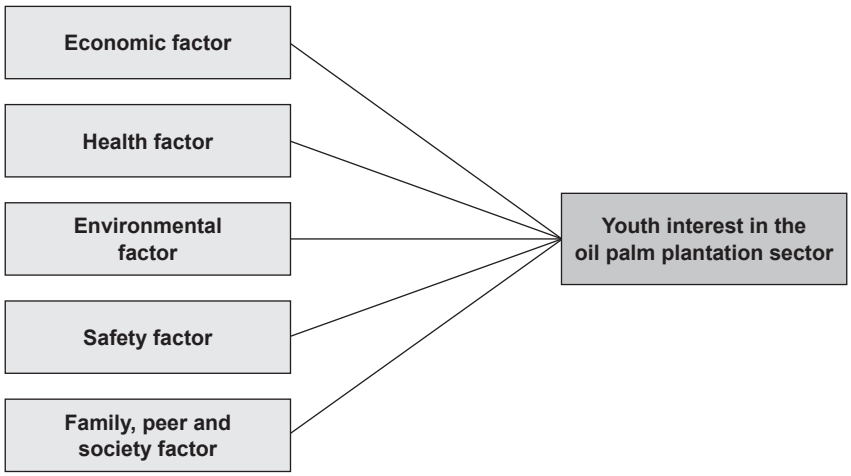

Figure 1. Research model.

TABLE 1. THE ZONES OF POPULATION

Zone	State	Population	Minimum sample	Actual no. of respondents
Northern	Kedah, Pulau Pinang and Perak	2 946 700	76	144
Central	Selangor and Federal Territory	3 897 300	100	144
Southern	Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor	2 607 300	67	144
East Coast	Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang	2 175 600	56	144
Eastern	Sarawak and Sabah	3 364 000	86	163
		14990900	**385**	**739**

relationship between independent variables and dependent variables was done using the SmartPLS software, which uses the partial least squares path modelling method. SmartPLS was used because it does not require any assumptions on the shape of the normal distribution. SmartPLS contains two parts: Measurement model and structural model. Measurement models consist of internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminative validity. Meanwhile, the structural model involves R square, variance inflation factor (VIF), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size f^2 and path coefficient test.

The study employs Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to track the internal consistency of the scale. CA is used to measure the accuracy of the items created by the study instrument. The lower the degree of error for an instrument, the higher the reliability of the instrument. CA values ranging from 0.00-0.49 are weak, 0.50-0.69 are moderate, and 0.70-1.00 are strong (Hair *et al.*, 2006; 2012).

Meanwhile, convergent validity based on outer loading (factor loading), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE). Each item should have a value of at least 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2006). If an item is below 0.50, the item will be deleted. However, if there is one item loading 0.50 can be accepted if other items with high loading can explain 50% (0.50) of the AVE (Tan and Ooi, 2018). CR is used to determine the consistency between items through the same test. The CR value is located between the interval between 0 and 1; in which the higher the value, the higher the reliability. Constructs with CR values of above 0.6 and 0.7 are acceptable, while those with values of above 0.8 and 0.9 are good (Hair *et al.*, 2006; 2012). The AVE test aims to determine the percentage of variance in describing the latent/construct. The AVE value should be more than 0.50; meaning that on average 50% of the latent variable is explained by the item's variance. However, according to Malhotra and Dash (2011), if the AVE value does not meet the threshold value of 0.50, the model measurement test can rely on CR alone because the value is more accurate than CA and AVE. The Discriminant Validity Test aims to measure the extent to which the measurements of each construct differ from the other constructs. Each construct/latent must have a higher value than the correlation matrix.

Next, the structural model contains the R square test as well as the variance inflation factor (VIF), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size f^2 and coefficient tests. R square aims to assess the variance of independent variables to explain the independent variables. VIF, on the other hand, aims to detect multicollinearity. Finally, the coefficient test is done to assess the level of impact of the variable. Predictive relevance (Q^2) is a measure of the model's predictive relevance. Q^2 is greater than 0 implies that the model has predictive relevance, whereas Q^2 is less than 0 implies that the model has lacks predictive relevance (Chin and Gopal 1995). The f^2 value is to determine the effect size such as 0.02, 0.13, and 0.26, which represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Cohen, 1988). The coefficient value analysed simultaneously T statistics, and significant level for assessing relationships between constructs and assessing the strength of the relationships between the exogenous and endogenous variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on *Table 2*, the findings of the study were obtained from 724 respondents, *i.e.*, 311 males and 413 females. Of the 724 respondents, 40.2% aged 21-25 years, 24.0% aged 26-30 years, 18.0% aged 31-35 years, and 17.0% aged 18-20 years. The majority of respondents were Malays (75.5%) followed by Chinese (10.6%), other races (9.7%) and Indian respondents (3.2%).

Meanwhile, 69.6% of respondents were single, 29.3% were married, and 1.1% were widows or divorcees. Majority of the respondents were employed (41%). This is followed by students (22.4%). 22% of respondents were unemployed and 14.6 % were self-employed. Most respondents' level of education was diploma and above. Based on *Table 2*, it was found that 38.8% were rural respondents, 35.2% were urban respondents, and

26% were suburban respondents. Finally, most respondents had never been involved in the oil palm industry. A total of 77.1% of respondents had not been involved in the oil palm industry, while 22.9% had been involved in the palm oil industry.

TABLE 2. DEMOGRAPHIC OF RESPONDENTS

Information	Frequency	%
Gender:		
Male	311	43.0
Female	413	57.0
Age:		
18 -20 years old	129	17.8
21 -25 years old	291	40.2
26 -30 years old	174	24.0
31 -35 years old	130	18.0
Race:		
Malay	554	76.5
Chinese	77	10.6
Indian	23	3.2
Others	70	9.7
Marital status:		
Single	504	69.6
Married	212	29.3
Divorced/Widowed	8	1.1
Occupation:		
Student	162	22.4
Employed	297	41.0
Self-employed	106	14.6
Not employed	159	22.0
Education level:		
Never went to school	9	1.2
Informal education	20	2.8
Primary school	13	1.8
Secondary school	274	37.8
Diploma	225	31.1
Degree/Masters/PhD	183	25.3
Residence:		
Urban	255	35.2
Suburban	188	26.0
Rural	281	38.8
Involvement in oil palm industry:		
Yes	166	22.9
No	558	77.1

Mean Analysis

From *Table 3*, the mean analysis of the Economic factor items showed mean values between 3.3494 and 4.0884. The highest mean value item is "Employees choose to work in sectors that provide social protection benefits (EPF, SOCSO and pensions). The lowest item is "working in the modern sector is better than the traditional sector" with a score of 3.3494. This phenomenon is attributable to the job's future such as promotion opportunities, salary increments, and so on.

The mean values under Health factor indicate that all the items are important. The item with the highest mean value is "requiring physical strength" (4.154) and the item with lowest mean is "detrimental to health" (2.895). The Environmental factors include the aspects of cleanliness, living space, easy access (entry and exit), green surrounding, quiet, internet access and telephone lines. Respondents stated that the palm oil industry felt peaceful and secure with green surrounding with a mean of around 3.8660, while the lowest mean is 2.7182. However, access to the internet is unsatisfactory in oil palm plantation areas due to the relatively remote location and it may be one of the barriers to the readiness of youth to get involved in oil palm plantations.

The oil palm industry is not immune to security issues. This issue is also a deciding factor for youth and teenagers wanting to get involved in the oil palm industry. The analysis found that the "respondents stated that the oil palm industry is vulnerable to animal disturbances and poisonous insects". This item has the highest mean of 3.9144. Meanwhile, the item with the lowest mean value is "providing safety clothing" with a mean value of 3.3715. Job security is the most important factor in career choices for youth. This situation clearly illustrates that they want a job that has the lowest risk.

Then, the interest of being involved in the oil palm industry that has the highest mean value was "teenagers/youth are currently not interested in working in the oil palm plantation sector". The lowest mean value comes from the item of "interest in working full-time in the oil palm plantation sector" (*Table 4*).

Analysis of Measurement Model

The outer loading test found that three out of six items were dropped from the Economic factor. Four items from the Health factor were also dropped from six items. One item from the Environmental factor was also dropped. For Safety factors, four items were dropped from the study's further model. For Family, peer and society factors, no items were dropped from the study's further model (*Table 5*). Meanwhile, two out of five items such as interest in working full-time in the oil palm plantation sector were dropped (*Table 5*).

After the deletion of items with a loading of less than 0.40, model measurement analysis was performed to determine the validity of the model. *Table 5* shows the CA, CR and AVE tests for all variables. The CA test results show that all the variables are strong, *i.e.* ≥ 0.70 (Hair *et al*., 2006; 2012). For the CR results, all variables are at an acceptable level, ranging from 0.712-0.941. Meanwhile for the AVE test, the economic and environmental factors scored less than 0.50. However, this model is still acceptable as the CR values exceeded 0.70.

TABLE 3. INVOLVEMENT FACTORS IN OIL PALM INDUSTRY

Factor/Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Economic factor:		
1. Working in modern sectors is better than the traditional sectors.	3.349	1.127
2. Workers choose jobs based on current trends.	3.764	1.035
3. Workers choose jobs based on the salary being offered.	4.065	0.987
4. The salary offered by the traditional sector is low.	3.449	1.063
5. Workers choose to work in sectors that provide social safety benefits (EPF, SOCSO, pension).	4.088	0.980
6. Workers choose to work in sectors that offer employee housing scheme.	3.894	1.011
Health factor:		
1. Detrimental to health.	2.895	1.053
2. Exposed to sunlight.	3.702	1.013
3. Requires physical strength.	4.154	0.884
4. Tiring.	3.874	0.962
5. Employer provides insurance coverage.	3.379	1.013
6. Employer bears the medical cost.	3.406	1.024
Environmental factor:		
1. Clean work environment.	2.750	0.960
2. Near to residence.	2.937	1.075
3. Easily accessible (entry/exit).	3.104	1.045
4. Has various amenities (toilets, prayer room, others).	2.961	1.045
5. Peaceful with the greeneries .	3.866	0.928
6. Quiet.	3.691	0.996
7. Has internet access.	2.718	1.092
8. Has telephone lines.	3.037	1.073
Safety factor:		
1. High risk of accident.	3.550	1.017
2. Provides safety clothing.	3.372	1.034
3. Provides emergency equipment (first aid).	3.430	1.062
4. Susceptible to intruders.	3.503	0.994
5. Susceptible to animal disturbances and poisonous insects.	3.914	0.962
6. Protected by plantation security guards.	3.276	1.030
Family, peer and society factor:		
1. Family supports working in oil palm plantations.	2.957	1.034
2. Family knows the career development potential in the oil palm industry.	3.068	1.037
3. Family is always sensitive to the development of the oil palm industry.	2.931	1.040
4. Peers support to work in the oil palm industry.	2.884	0.998
5. Peers are also interested in working in oil palm plantations.	2.803	1.026
6. My friends and I often discuss the development of the oil palm industry.	2.599	1.091
7. Have taken subjects related to the agricultural sector.	2.747	1.165
8. Teachers disclose the job opportunities in the agricultural sector.	2.979	1.122
9. Teachers support my choice to work in the oil palm industry.	2.852	1.049
10. Teachers often discuss the development of the oil palm industry.	2.750	1.089
11. Teachers are alert about news related to the oil palm industry and the agricultural sector.	2.873	1.060
12. Teachers are knowledgeable about the oil palm industry.	2.953	1.088

TABLE 4. INTERESTED TO BE INVOLVED IN PALM OIL INDUSTRY

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Interested to work full time in the oil palm plantation sector.	2.658	1.069
Interested to work part-time in the oil palm plantation sector.	2.831	1.117
Interested to continue the family's legacy of working in the oil palm plantation sector.	3.026	1.142
The youth nowadays are not interested in working in the palm oil plantation sector.	3.439	1.153
Working in the palm oil plantation sector is not as good as working in other modern sectors.	2.890	1.151

TABLE 5. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY RESULTS (SMARTPLS)

Factor/Item	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha (CA)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Economic factor:		0.671	0.712	0.467
1. Working in modern sectors is better than the traditional sectors.	x			
2. Workers choose jobs based on current trend.	x			
3. Workers choose jobs based on salary being offered.	x			
4. The salary offered by the traditional sector is low.	0.427			
5. Workers choose to work in sectors that provide social safety benefits (EPF, SOCSO, pension).	0.765			
6. Workers choose to work in sectors that offer employee housing scheme.	0.795			
Health factor:		0.878	0.888	0.801
1. Detrimental to health.	x			
2. Exposed to sunlight.	x			
3. Requires physical strength.	x			
4. Tiring.	x			
5. Employer provides insurance coverage.	0.794			
6. Employer bears the medical cost.	0.986			
Environmental Factor:		0.789	0.793	0.359
1. Clean work environment.	0.607			
2. Near to residence.	0.566			
3. Easily accessible (entry/exit).	0.692			
4. Has various amenities (toilets, prayer room, others).	x			
5. Peaceful with the greeneries.	0.408			
6. Quiet.	0.558			
7. Has internet access.	0.631			
8. Has telephone lines.	0.686			
Safety factor:		0.737	0.745	0.596
1. High risk of accident.	x			
2. Provides safety clothing.	x			
3. Provides emergency equipment (first aid).	0.845			
4. Susceptible to intruders.	x			
5. Susceptible to animal disturbances and poisonous insects.	x			
6. Protected by plantation security guards.	0.691			
Family, peer and society factor:		0.942	0.941	0.572
1. Family supports working in oil palm plantations.	0.895			
2. Family knows the career development potential in the oil palm industry.	0.708			
3. Family is always sensitive to the development of the oil palm industry.	0.631			
4. Peers support to work in the oil palm industry.	0.678			
5. Peers are also interested in working in oil palm plantations.	0.783			
6. My friends and I often discuss the development of the oil palm industry.	0.731			
7. Have taken subjects related to the agricultural sector.	0.857			
8. Teachers disclose the job opportunities in the agricultural sector.	0.803			
9. Teachers support my choice to work in the oil palm industry.	0.826			
10. Teachers often discuss the development of the oil palm industry.	0.671			
11. Teachers are alert about news related to the oil palm industry and the agricultural sector.	0.660			
12. Teachers are knowledgeable about the oil palm industry.	0.779			
Interested to be involved in palm oil industry:		0.839	0.842	0.641
1. Interested to work full time in the oil palm plantation sector.	0.879			
2. Interested to work part-time in the oil palm plantation sector.	0.771			
3. Interested to continue the family's legacy of working in the oil palm plantation sector.	0.744			
4. The youth nowadays are not interested in working in the palm oil plantation sector.	x			
5. Working in the palm oil plantation sector is not as good as working in other modern sectors.	x			

x = items deleted from SmartPLS

Discriminant Validity

There are two Discriminant Validity methods, namely Fornell and Lacker Criteria (1981), and Heterotraite-monotraite correlation ratio (HTMT) (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The Fornell and Larcker Criteria (1981) show that each variable value exceeds the correlation matrix value (*Table 6*). This signifies that there is no correlation between economic factors with other factors. The result of the HTMT correlation ratio is that there is no significant correlation between variables. This is evidenced by the variables' correlation matrix value of less than 0.90. This indicates that there is no cross-loading between the variable items (*Table 7*).

Common Method Bias

As the data were gathered by questionnaires, common method bias (CMB) may be a potential concern. Using Harman's single-factor method and a marker variable assessment technique to assess CMB (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). The unrotated principal components factor analysis (omitted for brevity) indicates that there is 25.460% of the total variance in Harman's single-factor test (less than 50%) indicating that no single factor loaded on all measures, which suggests there is no CMB (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). In addition, we use SmartPLS3.0 to test Common Method Bias with Random Dependent Variable, the respective variables' VIFs are significantly less than 3.3, which is found to have no impact on our model, again suggesting that there is no CMB (Rönkkö and Ylitalo, 2011). Based on the results from these two methods, confirmed that CMB does not exist in our study (*Table 8*).

Assessing the Structural Model

The relationship between one dependent variable and several independent variables can be assessed through bootstrapping analysis technique. It can also tell how well independent variables can predict the dependent variables. The results of R Square show that 43.6% of the independent variables can explain the dependent variable (*Table 9*).

TABLE 6. FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERION RESULTS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Economy (1)	0.683					
Family, peer and society (2)	0.207	**0.756**				
Safety (3)	0.324	0.522	**0.772**			
Health (4)	0.293	0.262	0.663	**0.895**		
Youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector (5)	0.249	0.643	0.374	0.260	**0.800**	
Environment (6)	0.318	0.549	0.674	0.416	0.413	0.599

TABLE 7. HETEROTRAIT-MONOTRAIT RATIO (HTMT) RESULTS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Economy (1)						
Family, peer and society (2)	0.220					
Safety (3)	0.347	0.522				
Health (4)	0.294	0.263	0.682			
Youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector (5)	0.260	0.640	0.375	0.264		
Environment (6)	0.360	0.536	0.683	0.428	0.415	

TABLE 8: COLLINEARITY STATISTICS (VIF)

Construct	Random
Economy	1.115
Family, peer and society	1.817
Safety	1.477
Health	1.861
Youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector	1.535
Environment	1.583

The VIF results show that the value of each independent variable is less than 10. This indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem in this model (Gujarati and Porter, 2009).

A predictive relevance (Q^2) value above 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2012). The predictive relevance (Q^2) value of the youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector is 0.247 (larger than 0), suggesting that economy, family, safety, health and environment have a predictive ability over youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector. The result of f^2 indicated that economy (f^2=0.016), family (f^2=0.420), safety (f^2=0.004), health (f^2=0.010) and environment (f^2=0.004) have small, large, small, small and small effects on youth interest in oil palm plantation sector, respectively (*Table 9*).

The results of the relationships between independent variables and dependent variables show that there are three significant relationships that motivate youth interest in the oil palm plantation sector. The first relationship is the relationship between family, peers and society, and the interest of youth in the oil palm plantation sector, whereby this relationship has the highest coefficient value (0.656). It shows that family, peers and society have a great influence on the interest of youth in the oil palm plantation sector. This is because their family members and friends give their support to the youth's intention to work in oil palm plantations. Apart from that, their friends are also interested in working in oil palm plantations. In addition, their teachers also disclose and support job opportunities in the agricultural sector.

The second relationship is the relationship whereby health influences youth's interest in the oil palm plantation sector. Although the palm oil sector has a high risk of accidents, this sector provides safety clothing. In addition, the sector also provides first aid equipment. Moreover, although the sector is highly vulnerable to animal disturbances and poisonous insects, there are plantation security guards protecting the workers.

The third relationship is where economic factor has an influence on youth's interest in the oil palm plantation sector. This is because the respondents choose to work in sectors that provide social protection benefits (EPF, SOCSO, pensions). This situation becomes the motivation of basic needs from an economic point of view; meaning that individuals view employment in terms of the salary offered by the employer. According to Heathfield (2013) salary is the amount of money or fixed compensation paid to an employee by an employer in return for work done. Salaries become an important attraction for individuals in choosing a job (Abdo, 2016).

However, the environment and safety did not attract young individuals to the oil palm plantation sector significantly. The perception of jobs in the oil palm plantation sector as low-skilled or manual labour might deter youth who are looking for more intellectually stimulating or innovative career paths. Safety measures, while important, might not be the primary factor influencing their decisions if they are more focused on career growth and development opportunities. Meanwhile, the work in the oil palm plantation sector is often physically demanding and involves outdoor activities. Near to residence and easily accessible might not align with the preferences of many youths, regardless of how close or accessible the workplace is. While internet access and phone lines are essential for communication and information exchange, they

TABLE 9. PATH COEFFICIENTS RESULTS

Relationship	Original sample (co-efficient value)	Standard deviation	T statistics	*P*-values	Variance inflation factor (VIF)	F-square
Relationship between economy and youth interest in oil palm plantation sector	0.101	0.040	2.536**	**0.012**	1.157	0.016
Relationship between family, peers and society, and youth interest in oil palm plantation sector	0.605	0.043	14.024*	**0.000**	1.545	0.420
Relationship between safety and youth interest in oil palm plantation sector	-0.086	0.087	0.981	**0.327**	2.928	0.004
Relationship between health and youth interest in oil palm plantation sector	0.102	0.059	1.745***	**0.082**	1.841	0.010
Relationship between environment and youth interest in oil palm plantation sector	0.064	0.065	0.988	**0.324**	2.068	0.004
R Square		**0.436**				
R Square Adjusted		**0.432**				
Q Square		**0.247**				

Note: Significant level: *=0.010, **=0.050, ***=0.100

might not directly relate to the core tasks involved in plantation work. As a result, these amenities might not significantly impact the appeal of the sector to the youth.

CONCLUSION

Individuals will usually be involved in a job motivated by the basic needs of themselves and their families, where the wants, food, clothing, shelter and others are categorised as economic factors. Then, they will be motivated by safety, health and environmental factors. This study was conducted to identify with certainty the real motivations that influence the interest of youth to have a career in the oil palm plantation sector.

This study showed that family, peers and society are the most important factors that motivate youth to be involved in the oil palm plantation sector. Other major factors are health and economic factors.

As there is motivation among the youth to get involved in the oil palm plantation sector, the initiatives undertaken by the government to open more employment opportunities for the youth and continue to develop the oil palm plantation sector are the right actions. The findings of this study can provide an important impact to policy makers and stakeholders such as the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) to jointly formulate better strategies to attract the targeted group and further increase their involvement in the oil palm plantation sector. For example, planning and promotion of employment opportunities in the plantation sector should be done more actively in rural areas than in urban areas. The importance of the oil palm plantation sector in generating the national economy needs to be publicised to attract youth participation in this sector.

Consistent with the findings of this study, relevant parties are also advised to provide adequate exposure and early education to youth about the importance and benefits of working in the oil palm plantation sector. Early exposure can reduce the stigma of the oil palm plantation sector. This sector is often compared to the modern sectors, and the oil palm plantation sector is perceived to be an inferior sector suitable for foreign labour. This stigma should be brushed aside as the oil palm plantation sector has great development potential. The development of oil palm plantations could be spurred through the involvement of more local labour. For a continuous development of the nation's oil palm industry, the youth, who are the country's assets should not be wasted.

Creating a program to educate youth and parents about the potential of the palm oil agriculture industry can be a valuable initiative. The palm oil industry is important in many economies, and raising awareness about its opportunities and challenges can help individuals make informed decisions about their future endeavours. Building on the findings that family greatly impacts youth career decisions, we recommend developing tailored sessions within the program that specifically address parents. These sessions can emphasise the diverse opportunities, benefits, and sustainable practices within the palm oil agriculture industry. By fostering understanding and support among parents, we can empower them to provide informed guidance to their children as they consider potential career paths. By engaging youth and parents in an educational program about the potential of the palm oil agriculture industry, participants can gain a holistic understanding of its benefits and challenges. Empowering individuals with knowledge can help them make informed decisions, contribute positively to the industry's development, and promote sustainable practices for a more responsible future.

The study also found that youth are more interested in jobs that offer social protection benefits such as EPF, SOCSO and pensions. Policies need to be refined to improve employment benefits over time. The plantation sector is generally a physical occupation and involves outdoor activities. Thus, the offer of employment benefits must be commensurate with the risks that they have to face. Offering appropriate employment benefits will be a motivation for them to serve in the oil palm plantation sector.

An effective approach to increase youth involvement in the oil palm plantation sector can resolve various important issues in the country. First, increased youth involvement can improve the country's economic potential with the opening of new oil palm plantations; which consequently can increase the country's export revenue. Second, it can curb the issue of unemployment among youth and reduce dependence on labour from abroad. This will have a positive impact not only on economic issues but also the country's social issues.

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