

The Influence of Personal and Socio-Environmental Factors on Perceived Employability among Online MBA Graduates

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of Self-Efficacy and University Support on the Perceived Employability of MBA graduates from selected private higher education institutions in Klang Valley, Malaysia. A quantitative survey method was employed using a structured questionnaire, with 153 valid responses obtained from 230 questionnaires distributed. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 30 and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4. The results showed that both Self-Efficacy and University Support had significant positive effects on Perceived Employability, with University Support demonstrating a slightly stronger influence. Both hypotheses were supported. The findings suggest that a combination of individual capabilities and institutional support shapes perceived Employability. Accordingly, universities may strengthen graduates' employability through career development initiatives, industry engagement, and academic and professional support. The findings also provide useful insights to help MBA graduates develop their confidence, capabilities, and career-related competencies to enhance their employability.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy, University Support, Perceived Employability, MBA graduates.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The changing labour market and the growing demand of employers on graduates have put a greater emphasis on employability at the graduate level and the expectation to have knowledge, skills, adaptability, and work competencies that are relevant to the workplace. Employability of graduates is still a higher education issue in Malaysia. According to DOSM (2025), the number of graduates in 2024 was around 5.98 million, of which the graduate unemployment rate stood at 3.2%, which shows that it is still necessary to build the readiness of graduates in the labour market. Some factors that could potentially impact graduate employability are Self-Efficacy and University Support. Self-Efficacy is the confidence a person has in doing something and achieving a desired result. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) states that Self-Efficacy affects motivation, behaviour, persistence and performance. Tan et al. (2025) and Wong and Saraih (2024) found positive relationships between Self-Efficacy and graduate employability, which were statistically significant.

Similarly, Xu et al. (2026) reported that university support increases the students' perceived employability via psychological resources. University Support includes academic assistance, career guidance, learning tools, mentoring, networking, and professional development support that help students enhance their academic and career skills. These factors are especially significant to online MBA education, as students are frequently juggling work and study, and handling their learning remotely via online platforms. This could mean the need for more self-direction and confidence, and for appropriate academic and career support to develop employability skills. This study was guided by Social Cognitive Theory, which focuses on the interaction between personal and environmental factors; hence, the influence of Perceived Employability among 153 MBA graduates from selected private higher education institutions in Klang Valley with graduation periods between 2023-2025 was studied. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature, which has a narrow scope of research on the study of knowledge management among MBA graduates in the higher education system in Malaysia, specifically MBA graduates from an online MBA programme. The literature has focused on the employability of university students and undergraduates, but to date, limited work has been done on the employability of MBA

postgraduates and the combined impact of personal and institutional factors on an MBA's Perceived Employability. Thus, this study is directed towards bringing out empirical evidence of the contribution of Self-Efficacy and University Support for the Perceived Employability of MBA Graduates. The results of the study will offer relevant information for higher education institutions, MBA programme providers, and MBA graduates on the enhancement of career readiness and employability.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Underpinning Theory

This study is based on the theory of Bandura (1986), which is called Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). SCT provides a theory that elucidates how human behaviour is explained via a complex interaction between personal and environmental factors, behavior, and outcomes. The theory proposes that an individual is not just growing and acting independently of the environment, but that the individual's beliefs and the environment influence the actions and outcomes of the individual. This study used self-efficacy as one of the personal factors of SCT. Self-efficacy is someone's belief in their capacity to perform actions and to achieve results.

Bandura (1986) said that those with a higher level of self-efficacy will be more willing to make effort, persevere, and have confidence when they face problems. As a result, graduates with higher self-efficacy may have better knowledge and skills to apply them, face the challenges of their careers, and seek employment opportunities, leading to increased graduate employability. In the proposed model, the environmental factor is the support the university gets. Academic guidance, career services, learning resources, mentoring, networking, and professional development activities are examples of the services that universities can offer.

Supportive environmental conditions from the SCT perspective can enable people to develop and help shape their behaviour and outcomes. Therefore, having been trained at the university, an MBA graduate could benefit from the resources and opportunities that might enhance and boost their skills and employment preparation. This theory provides a theoretically sound foundation for examining the connections between self-efficacy, university support, and the employability of graduates. Self-efficacy encompasses the personal dimension, whereas university support encompasses the environmental dimension, and graduate employability is the result of the interaction between the personal and environmental dimensions. Thus, the conceptual model developed in this study will be used in the context of the MBA graduates from the selected private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within Klang Valley from 2023-2025, and this conceptual model is based on SCT. The research expands the scope of SCT to graduate employability; it examines the relationship between personal capability beliefs and institutional environmental support with MBA graduates' perceived employability.

Perceived Employability

Perceived employability refers to an individual's perception of their ability to obtain, maintain, and secure suitable employment opportunities. It reflects how graduates evaluate their own knowledge, skills, competencies, and ability to respond to labour market demands. Unlike objective employability, which may be reflected through actual employment status or salary, perceived employability focuses on graduates' subjective assessment of their employment prospects.

Perceived employability is particularly relevant among MBA graduates because completing a postgraduate qualification does not automatically guarantee successful employment or career opportunities. Graduates need to recognise their own capabilities and confidence in applying their knowledge and skills in the labour market. Recent research has shown that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with employability, suggesting that individuals who have stronger confidence in their capabilities may perceive themselves as more capable of obtaining employment opportunities (Tan et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), perceived employability can be understood as an outcome influenced by personal and environmental factors. Self-efficacy represents a key personal factor because individuals' beliefs about their capabilities influence how they approach challenges and opportunities.

At the same time, university support represents an environmental factor that can provide resources, guidance, career development opportunities, and learning experiences that strengthen graduates' employment readiness.

Therefore, this study examines perceived employability as the dependent variable and investigates whether self-efficacy and university support significantly influence the perceived employability of MBA graduates. The focus is on 153 alumni who graduated from MBA programmes at selected private higher education institutions in Klang Valley between 2023 and 2025.

Self-Efficacy

The theory that underlies this study is Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) proposed by Bandura (1986). SCT is a theory that focuses on the interplay between personal and environmental factors, behavior, and outcomes to explain human behaviour. The theory suggests that people do not grow and act apart from the environment, but rather their beliefs and environmental factors shape their actions and outcomes. In this study, self-efficacy is one of the personal factors included in SCT. Self-efficacy is a person's confidence in his or her ability to execute actions and accomplish results. Bandura (1986) stated that people who have a higher level of self-efficacy will be more likely to exert effort, persevere, and have confidence when encountering problems. As a result, graduates with higher self-efficacy may have better knowledge and skills to apply them, face the challenges of their careers, and seek employment opportunities, leading to increased graduate employability.

The environmental factor in the proposed model is the support received by the university. Academic guidance, career services, learning resources, mentoring, networking, and professional development activities are examples of the services that universities can offer. Supportive environmental conditions from the SCT perspective can enable people to develop and help shape their behaviour and outcomes. Therefore, having been trained at the university, an MBA graduate could benefit from the resources and opportunities that might enhance and boost their skills and employment preparation. Thus, the theory offers a logical basis to discuss the relationships among self-efficacy, university support, and graduate employability. Self-efficacy encompasses the personal dimension, whereas university support encompasses the environmental dimension, and graduate employability is the result of the interaction between the personal and environmental dimensions.

Although Kanapathipillai et al. (2021) focused on Job Performance rather than Perceived Employability, their findings provide supporting evidence that Self-Efficacy can contribute to positive employment-related outcomes. Therefore, Self-Efficacy is considered an important personal factor that may enhance the Perceived Employability of online MBA graduates. Therefore, the conceptual model proposed in this study is based on SCT and will be applied to the context of MBA graduates in selected private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley between 2023-2025. The study broadens the scope of SCT to the level of graduate employability, focusing on the impact of personal capability beliefs and institutional environmental support on MBA perceived employability.

H1: Self-Efficacy has a significant positive influence on Perceived Employability among MBA graduates.

University Support

University support refers to the academic, administrative, technological, career, and developmental assistance provided to students by higher education institutions to support their educational and career goals. Resources for this support can include academic guidance, career information, learning resources, mentoring, employment services, and professional development opportunities. In recent years, the role of employment support institutions in helping graduates enter the labor market has been emphasized, with the university system emerging as a crucial institution for facilitating graduates' transition (Ye et al., 2025).

For online MBA students, university support is especially crucial since they are not in the classroom and must self-manage their learning process while utilizing the academic and technological resources, they have at their fingertips while learning online. Career-related guidance, resources, and opportunities for students can be enhanced by effective institutional support, which can help strengthen their readiness for employment. University students' perceived employability was related to university support, which was confirmed by the

recent Malaysian study conducted by Xu et al. (2026). This study is one of the first to directly examine the relationship between university support and perceived employability among university students. Xu et al. (2026) found that university support plays an important role in enhancing students' perceived employability through psychological resources.

University Support is an important environmental factor that can contribute to students' academic and career development. Support may include academic guidance, career services, learning resources, mentoring, networking, training, and professional development opportunities. Bawazir et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of organisational support in providing training, development opportunities, leadership commitment, and resources that help individuals adapt to changing work environments and develop their skills. Although their study focused on organisational rather than university support, the findings demonstrate the broader importance of a supportive environment in facilitating skill development and career growth. More directly, Xu et al. (2026) found that university support contributes to students' perceived employability through psychological resources. Therefore, University Support is considered an important environmental factor in strengthening the Perceived Employability of MBA graduates.

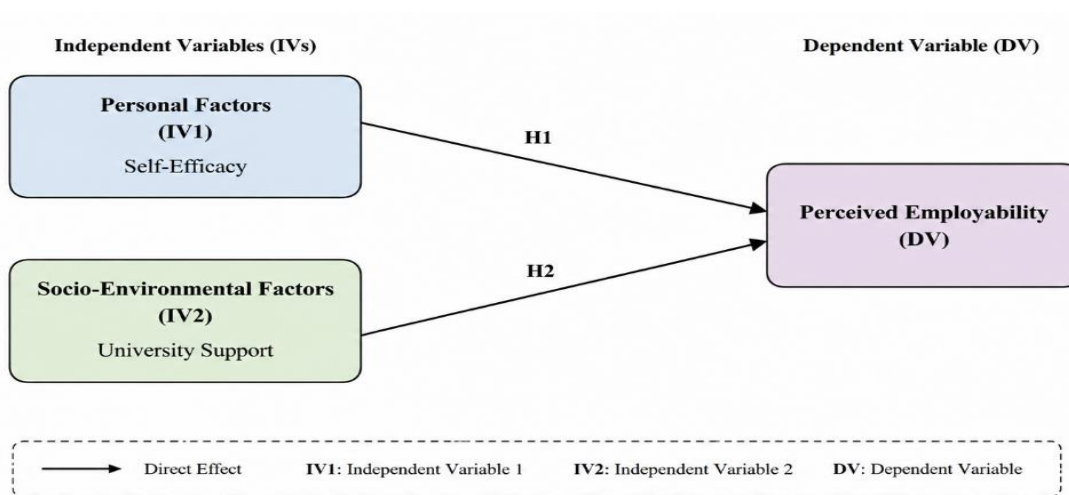
According to Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, university support is one of the important environmental factors. SCT sees personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences as dynamically interacting to influence and shape individual development and outcomes. Thus, the supportive context of the university can have an impact on graduates' confidence, behaviors, and employment outcomes. Thus, this study focuses on university support as an independent variable and how it affects the perceived employability of 153 alumni of the selected private higher education institutions in Klang Valley from 2023 to 2025 who have completed their MBA programme.

H2: University Support has a significant positive influence on Perceived Employability among MBA graduates.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 2.1

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Bandura (1986)

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships among the study variables among graduates of online MBA programmes at selected private higher education institutions in Malaysia. Data was collected at a single point in time using a structured, self-administered online questionnaire.

A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed electronically, and 153 complete questionnaires were received, representing a response rate of 66.5%. The collected data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 30 and SmartPLS 4 to conduct descriptive analysis and test the measurement and structural models using PLS-SEM.

Population and Sample Size

The population was restricted to the graduates of the selected private higher education institutions' online MBA programmes in Malaysia during 2023 to 2025. The respondents were selected through a purposive sampling technique because the respondents had to be those who fulfilled the required eligibility criteria. The final sample of valid respondents for data analysis from the targeted population was 153. The number of samples was deemed sufficient for testing the research model proposed in the study using the PLS-SEM method.

Sampling Framework

The sampling framework was generated from the eligibility criteria defined for the study. The target respondents were graduates from the selected private HEIs from 2023 to 2025 who were graduates of an online MBA program. To ensure that only respondents who met certain criteria were included in the study, purposive sampling was used. The sampling process thus filtered for graduates who had first-hand experience in online MBA teaching and related career development experiences.

Data Collection

A quantitative survey was used to collect the data, which was administered online and targeted at eligible participants who met the inclusion criteria. The survey link was sent via the appropriate communication channels electronically so that it would be accessible to those who had completed their degree in an online MBA program. Respondents were given an information statement detailing the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, that rights to confidentiality would be maintained, and that the information they provided would be used as part of an academic study. The participants had to give their informed consent before answering the questionnaire. The completed responses were then checked for completeness and eligibility and were then ready for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS 30 and SmartPLS 4. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were first summarised by descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage distributions). The data were then evaluated for completeness and appropriateness for further analyses. To explore the relationship between self-efficacy, university support, and perceived employability, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used, and SmartPLS 4 was applied in this study. This analysis was carried out in two stages, which are the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model was applied to check the reliability and validity of the constructs. To evaluate the internal consistency reliability and convergent validity, indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted (AVE) were investigated. The Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used to evaluate the discriminant validity. The structural model was then evaluated to examine the proposed relationships. The significance of the hypothesised relationships was determined using path coefficients (β), t values and p values from the bootstrapping process. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also studied to validate how well the model explains the data. Analysis was employed to test for the statistical significance of the influences of self-efficacy and university support on perceived employability of the online MBA graduates.

Ethical Consideration

All ethical guidelines for this study were followed in the research. A process was followed to ensure the rights, privacy, and safety of all participants. Prior to participation, the purpose, scope, and academic goals of the study were explained to all respondents. Each respondent gave their informed consent on a digital medium as part of the consent process, including their consent to be identified by the same name on the questionnaire. Information on the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any point in the procedure was also provided.

Data collection took place anonymously, and no personally identifiable information was collected. Information was collected that can be identified but was collected to protect respondent confidentiality. All survey data were kept in password-protected files and only available to the research team. The study was carried out in accordance with the researcher's ethical provisions, in an academic institution and following internationally recognised practices of research ethics principles. These measures in total reflect integrity, respect and ethical responsibility throughout the research process.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The population of this study in Table 1 comprised employed graduates who completed online MBA programmes in Malaysian higher education institutions between 2023 to 2025. The demographic profile of the 153 respondents is presented in Table 4.1. The sample was predominantly male ($n = 85$, 55.6%), aged between 31 and 35 years ($n = 73$, 47.7%), with between 6 and 10 years of working experience ($n = 71$, 46.4%), and employed in the private sector ($n = 132$, 86.3%). Most respondents were at the middle management level ($n = 73$, 47.7%), earning between RM3,001 and RM5,000 per month ($n = 63$, 41.2%), with between 1 and 5 years of job tenure in their current position ($n = 65$, 42.5%). In terms of MBA graduation year, the largest group graduated in 2024 ($n = 53$, 34.6%), followed closely by 2025 ($n = 52$, 34.0%) and 2023 ($n = 48$, 31.4%). Regarding post-MBA career outcomes, the majority reported receiving a promotion following graduation ($n = 91$, 59.5%), while slightly more than half remained in their current employment ($n = 81$, 52.9%). Collectively, the demographic profile reveals a sample of mid-career working professionals employed predominantly in the private sector at the middle management level, a profile broadly representative of the target population of online postgraduate learners at selected private universities in Malaysia.

Table 1. Demographic and Employment Characteristics of Respondents (N-153)

No.	Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	85	55.6
		Female	68	44.4
2	Age	25–30 years	39	25.5
		31–35 years	73	47.7
		36–40 years	28	18.3
		41 years and above	13	8.5
3	Working Experience	1–5 years	39	25.5
		6–10 years	71	46.4
		>10 years	43	28.1
4	Employment Sector	Private	132	86.3
		Public	21	13.7
		Self-employed	0	0.0
5	Management Level	Non-management	61	39.9
		Middle management	73	47.7
		Senior management	19	12.4
6	Monthly Income	< RM3,000	25	16.3
		RM3,001–5,000	63	41.2
		RM5,001–7,000	43	28.1
		> RM7,000	22	14.4
7	Job Tenure	<1 year	12	7.8
		1–5 years	65	42.5
		6–10 years	53	34.6
		>10 years	23	15.0
8	Year of MBA Graduation	2023	48	31.4
		2024	53	34.6
		2025	52	34.0
9	Promotion After MBA	Yes	91	59.5
		No	62	40.5
10	Job Change After MBA	Yes	72	47.1
		No	81	52.9

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 indicate that the three study variables recorded relatively similar mean scores. Self-Efficacy had the highest mean ($M = 24.4118$, $SD = 4.23104$), followed by University Support ($M = 24.4052$, $SD = 4.24487$) and Perceived Employability ($M = 24.3137$, $SD = 4.28349$). The results suggest relatively positive levels across the three constructs, with moderate variation in respondents' scores. All three variables were based on 153 valid responses.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
IV1_SE	153	15.00	34.00	24.4118	4.23104
IV2_US	153	12.00	33.00	24.4052	4.24487
DV_PE	153	15.00	33.00	24.3137	4.28349
Valid N (listwise)	153				

4.2 Normality Test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) tests were used to check the normality of data distribution prior to performing inferential statistical analysis. As presented in Table 3, the Shapiro-Wilk test recommended as the more reliable normality test for sample sizes below 300 (Field, 2018) indicated that all three variables were normally distributed: IV1_SE ($S-W = 0.984$, $p = 0.071$), IV2_US ($S-W = 0.990$, $p = 0.368$), and DV_PE ($S-W = 0.986$, $p = 0.113$). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check whether the data were normally distributed, yielding a marginally significant result for IV1_SE ($p = 0.015$), which is in line with the known tendency of the K-S test for over-sensitivity, especially when applying Lilliefors significance correction (Field, 2018). The S-W values for all of the three variables were found to be close to 1.0, with the values ranging from 0.984 to 0.990, which showed that there was very little practical deviation from normality. The results obtained here supported the assumption of normality, and the parametric statistical tests were therefore considered suitable for testing the hypotheses in this study.

Table 3. Normality Test

Variable	K-S Statistic	K-S df	K-S Sig.	S-W Statistic	S-W df	S-W Sig.	Decision
IV1_SE	0.081	153	0.015	0.984	153	0.071	Normal
IV2_US	0.071	153	0.055	0.990	153	0.368	Normal
DV_PE	0.065	153	0.200*	0.986	153	0.113	Normal

4.3 Measurement Model Assessment

Cronbach's alpha, ρ_A , composite reliability (ρ_C), and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to evaluate the reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha scores ranged from 0.871 to 0.883, with Perceived Employability (PE) having the highest score of 0.883, followed by Self-Efficacy (SE) at 0.881 and University Support (US) at 0.871, as shown in Table 4. All values were above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the measurement items had satisfactory internal consistency. Likewise, the ρ_A values for these scales ranged from 0.873 to 0.885, and composite reliability values ranged from 0.900 to 0.907. These values exceeded the recommended value of 0.70, thus indicating that all three constructs had acceptable composite reliability. The AVE values were 0.550 for Perceived Employability, 0.583 for Self-Efficacy, and 0.564 for University Support for convergent validity. The AVE scores for all constructs were higher than the recommended value of 0.50, thus reflecting that the constructs explained more than 50% of the variance in their indicators. Thus, the convergent validity of the measurement model was confirmed. The overall results show that Perceived Employability, Self-Efficacy, and University Support have good internal consistency, reliability and convergent validity. Therefore, the measurement model is adequate and appropriate for the next step, which is to assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model and the structural model.

Table 4. Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	ρ_A	CR (ρ_C)	AVE	Decision
PE – Perceived Employability	.883	.885	.907	.550	Accepted
SE – Self-Efficacy	.881	.882	.907	.583	Accepted
US – University Support	.871	.873	.900	.564	Accepted

4.4 Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated in terms of collinearity, explanatory power, and effect size. The results of the structural model assessment are presented in Table 5. The inner VIF values for Self-Efficacy and University Support were both 3.458, lower than the critical value of 5.00, meaning that there was no critical multicollinearity found in the structural model. The Perceived Employability R^2 value obtained was 0.786, and the adjusted R^2 value obtained was 0.784. This indicates that the combination of the two factors “Self-Efficacy” and “University Support” accounted for 78.6 percent of the variance in the perceived employability, which is a significant amount of variance. The results of the effect size indicated a medium effect for Self-Efficacy ($f^2 = 0.263$) and University Support ($f^2 = 0.316$) on Perceived Employability. In the overall model, both predictor constructs contributed significantly to the model of Perceived Employability.

Table 5. Structural Model Assessment Results

Assessment	Relationship / Construct	Result	Interpretation
Inner VIF	Self-Efficacy → Perceived Employability	3.458	No critical collinearity
Inner VIF	University Support → Perceived Employability	3.458	No critical collinearity
R^2	Perceived Employability	0.786	Substantial explanatory power
Adjusted R^2	Perceived Employability	0.784	Stable explanatory power
f^2	Self-Efficacy → Perceived Employability	0.263	Medium effect
f^2	University Support → Perceived Employability	0.316	Medium effect

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

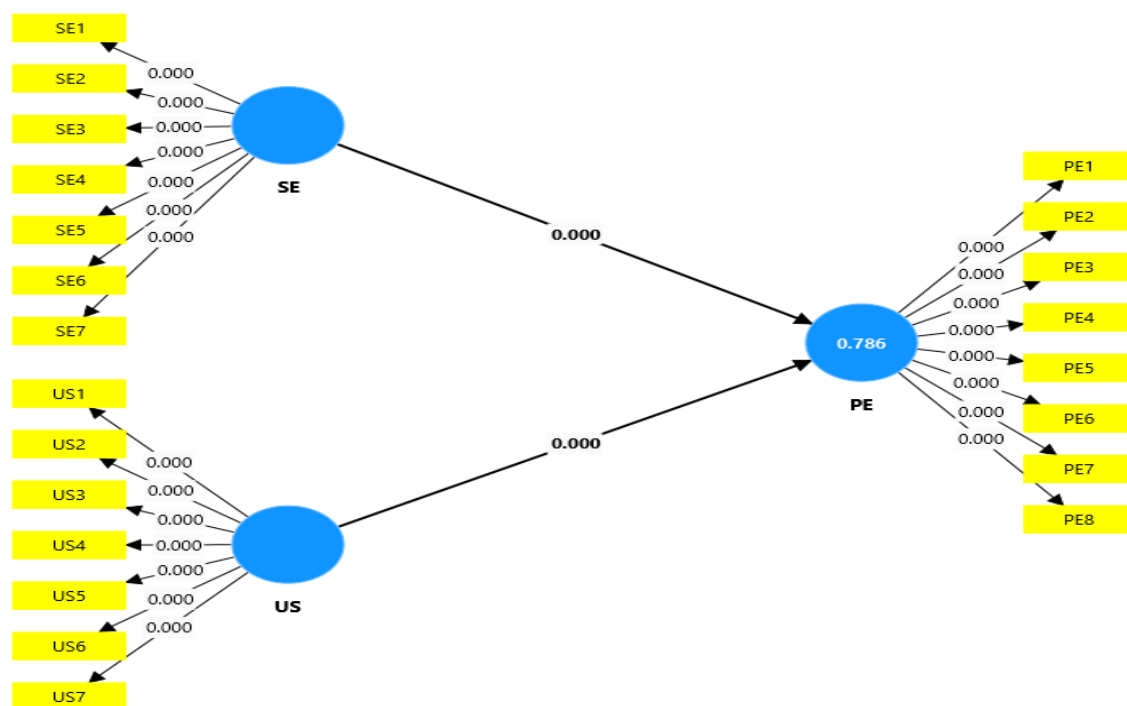
The path coefficients in Table 6 indicate that both Self-Efficacy (SE) and University Support (US) have positive and statistically significant effects on Perceived Employability (PE).

Table 6. Structural Model Assessment Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	T-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Self-Efficacy → Perceived Employability	0.441	6.320	0.000	Supported
H2	University Support → Perceived Employability	0.483	7.194	0.000	Supported

The two predictors, University Support and Self-Efficacy, have slightly different effects on Perceived Employability, with University Support being the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.483$) than Self-Efficacy ($\beta = 0.441$). The p-value of both relationships is less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$) and the t value is greater than the general rule of thumb for a two-tailed test ($t > 1.96$). Both hypothesised relationships are supported by the results. The two factors Self-Efficacy and University Support are found to have a significant and positive impact on Perceived Employability, with the latter being the more highly predictive.

Figure 2. Structural Model



The structural model of Figure 2 was evaluated based on the path coefficient, t-value, p-value, and coefficient of determination (R^2). Based on the results shown in Figure 4.1, the researchers analyzed two variables (Self-Efficacy (SE) and University Support (US)) to determine whether they could predict Perceived Employability (PE). The analysis results show that both Self-Efficacy and University Support have positive and statistically significant influences on Perceived Employability. Self-efficacy had a positive and significant relationship with perceived employability ($\beta = 0.441$, $t = 6.320$, $p < 0.001$). The results suggest that those who have more self-efficacy are more likely to rate themselves as more employable. So, the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between Self-Efficacy and Perceived Employability is accepted. Likewise, University Support had a positive and significant relationship with Perceived Employability ($\beta = 0.483$, $t = 7.194$, $p < 0.001$).

This finding implies that greater support given by the university is related to higher perceived employability. Therefore, the hypothesis suggesting that there is a positive relationship between University Support and Perceived Employability is accepted. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for Perceived Employability was 0.786, which means that 78.6% of the variance in Perceived Employability was explained by Self-Efficacy and

University Support. The remaining 21.4% could be due to other factors not covered by the current research model. In general, the results show that the structural model is a good predictor of Perceived Employability. Both predictors had a significant effect on Perceived Employability; the effect was slightly greater for University Support ($\beta = 0.483$) than for Self-Efficacy ($\beta = 0.441$). This indicates that, in the study context, university can be a more salient factor in improving people's perceptions of their employability.

5.1 DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This section discusses the findings of the study based on the Research Questions (RQs), Research Objectives (ROs) and hypotheses developed.

Self-Efficacy and Perceived Employability

The results give empirical evidence to Research Question 1 and Research Objective 1. Based on the results, it shows that Self-Efficacy makes a positive and statistically significant contribution to Perceived Employability ($\beta = 0.441$, $t = 6.320$, $p < 0.001$). The p-value is less than 0.05 (significant threshold), and the t value is greater than 1.96 (critical value), so it is concluded that H1 is accepted. This discovery shows that self-efficacy can be considered an important predictor of the online MBA graduates' perceived employability. The result is in line with recent empirical studies. According to Ngoc et al. (2024), Self-Efficacy was one of the factors that significantly contributed to the self-perceived employability of students, and Mainga et al. (2025) concluded that perceived employability of business graduates was significantly related to Self-Efficacy. Similarly, a recent study by Chen et al. (2025) revealed that general Self-Efficacy played a significant positive role in the employability of undergraduate students and that it had an indirect effect on employability through achievement motivation and occupational aspirations. The results of these studies are also congruent with the findings of the present study, which shows that people with high levels of self-efficacy believe they are more employable.

The finding is also applicable to Malaysia. However, recent Malaysian evidence has yielded mixed results. In their study of 256 final-year students from 20 Malaysian public universities, Mohd Amin et al. (2025) revealed that there was no significant mediation effect of SE between the components of CareerEDGE. The difference can be explained by the difference in population, research model, and the role of Self-Efficacy. The present study focused on the direct relationship between Self-Efficacy and Perceived Employability in online MBA students, while Mohd Amin et al. (2025) focused on the mediation of Self-Efficacy in undergraduate students.

It is important to note that in the present study, there is a significant positive relationship between confidence and the perception of employability, which implies that greater confidence in the ability to undertake tasks, face difficulties, learn new skills, and meet employment challenges will lead to an increase in the perception of employability. It is especially relevant to online MBA graduates, who may need to constantly use what they've learned, acquire new skills, and adjust to new demands in the job market. Hence, the results further support the important role of Self-Efficacy as an internal psychological resource that guides Perceived Employability. On the research objective, RO1 has been reached as RO1 stated that there is a significant positive relationship between Self-Efficacy and Perceived Employability. Therefore, the answer to RQ1 is supported by the finding that Self-Efficacy has a significant and positive effect on Perceived Employability. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

University Support and Perceived Employability

The findings support Research Question 2 and Research Objective 2 in an empirical manner. The results show that University Support has a positive and statistically significant effect on Perceived Employability ($\beta = 0.483$, $t = 7.194$, $p < 0.001$). The p-value is less than 0.05, and the t-value is greater than 1.96; hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and there is some evidence that supports the alternative hypothesis H2. This finding suggests that the graduates who feel that their university supports them more highly report higher levels of Perceived Employability. This finding aligns with Ngoc et al. (2024), who reported that the students felt university support was significantly related to their perceived employability.

The finding is also in line with the empirical findings from Malaysia. Suradee et al. (2024) conducted a study with 403 final-year students in Malaysian universities and concluded that the support of the university was an important factor in enhancing students' global employability. They found that institutional support can help students build both knowledge and skills and make them employable. Likewise, Almasri et al. (2024) found that university factors such as quality, academic programmes, infrastructure, support facilities, academic staff, and training were significant factors from employer perspectives in determining graduates' employability. The positive correlation found in the present study indicates that university support can be of great benefit to graduates in terms of increasing their readiness for employment.

Academic support, learning materials, career information, professional development, networking and industry exposure can support the ability for graduates to transfer the knowledge and skills gained in their studies to the world of work. The notion of university career support as an integral part of the students' career resources and its link to employability-related outcomes is also supported by Antonio and Chiesa (2024). An interesting result is that the path coefficient for University Support ($\beta = 0.483$) is higher than the path coefficient for Self-Efficacy ($\beta = 0.441$), meaning that University Support is the better predictor of Perceived Employability in the proposed model. The results of this finding indicate that perceptions of employability are influenced not just by psychological resources, but also by the institutional context. This view is also supported by recent empirical research which has found that university support, either directly or indirectly via psychological resources like career decision self-efficacy and career adaptability, has an influence on perceived employability.

The support of the university can therefore be especially significant for an online MBA graduate as they may benefit from the availability of academic resources, professional networking and career guidance, to help them apply what they have learned and build skills for the workforce. The practical experiences, links to industry, mentoring, career counselling and networking are also key components of the research on activities that build students' employability, which has been conducted recently. In relation to RO2, the research objective is answered as the findings have revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between University Support and Perceived Employability. So the answer to RQ2 is yes, and H2 is supported. Overall, these results further endorse recent empirical studies and confirm that higher education institutions are significant in the development of employability of their students through institutional support, academic support, career support, and professional support.

Overall Discussion of RQ1, RQ2, RO1, RO2 and the Hypotheses

The findings of the study support research objectives #1 and #2, and in turn research hypotheses #1 and #2. These factors of Self-Efficacy and University Support were statistically significant and positively related to Perceived Employability. Both RQ1 and RQ2 are thus answered, and RO1 and RO2 are achieved. The findings also suggest Personal Factors and Environmental Factors influence Perceived Employability. Self-Efficacy is an internal/personal factor because it is the individual's confidence in his/her ability, and University Support is an external/institutional factor because it provides opportunities and resources for growth. Both the ability to perform and the support of the education institution have a significant effect on Perceived Employability, indicating that both influence Perceived Employability.

This conclusion is further strengthened by the explanation of the behaviour given by the model. The R^2 value of 0.786 shows that the variance in Perceived Employability can be explained by 78.6% based on the effects of the variables Self-Efficacy and University Support. The model proposed has a high explanatory value in predicting Perceived Employability, suggesting that this model is very useful in explaining the phenomenon of Perceived Employability. The remaining 21.4% of the variance can be accounted for by factors not accounted for in the current model.

Overall, the results indicate that a person-to-person and person-to-institution dimension is needed to improve PE. While building confidence and skills of the developing people is essential, it can be enhanced by having universities offer them the necessary academic, career, and development support. The results therefore provide empirical evidence that Perceived Employability is significantly influenced by the factors of Self-Efficacy and University Support. To sum up, H1 and H2 are supported, RO1 and RO2 are met, and RQ1 and RQ2 are

answered in a positive manner. Predictors of Perceived Employability are both Self-Efficacy and University Support, with the latter having a greater effect on Perceived Employability.

Theoretical Significance

This study adds to the literature on employability as it shows that both Self-Efficacy and University Support significantly affect Perceived Employability. The results indicate that the model is significant, with 78.6% of the variance in Perceived Employability explained, and that the predictors of Self-Efficacy ($\beta = 0.441$) and University Support ($\beta = 0.483$) are significant. This points not only to the significance of personal and institutional factors in employability, but also to the need to take a holistic view of employability.

Practical Significance

The results indicate that Self-Efficacy and institutional support need to be improved to enhance the employability of the students at the university level. Career guidance, mentoring, industry engagement, professional networking, experiential learning, and skills development are just a few examples of practical initiatives. These activities can assist students in building confidence and skills applicable to the workplace.

Significance to MBA graduates

It is important for MBA graduates to continuously build their confidence, professional skills, flexibility, and career competencies, and to actively seek out opportunities to utilize the university's career and academic support services. These actions can help them to be better prepared to seek out and advance in their careers.

Significance to Policy and Higher Education Development

The results indicate that there is a need to have employability development embedded in the policies of higher education programs. Universities must offer easy access to career services, industry connections, job training and development, and support for students taking online courses. These can boost the employment readiness of graduates to meet evolving labor market needs.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of this study. The first is that the study was undertaken on MBA graduates from selected higher education institutions in the Klang Valley, and this may result in the findings not being generalisable to other parts of Malaysia and other populations. Second, the cross-sectional design limited the study to the relationships between the variables Self-Efficacy, University Support and Perceived Employability at a single point in time, therefore omitting the possibility of assessing changes in variables over time. A recent study of perceived employability has illustrated the benefits of a longitudinal study design in understanding variations in perceived employability across graduates' career transitions (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Thirdly, common method bias is always possible due to the use of self-administered questionnaires, where information is gathered from one source. Podsakoff et al. (2024) pointed out that common method bias is a significant methodological issue for self-reported studies. Finally, research of a more comprehensive and holistic nature should be conducted with larger and more heterogeneous samples in various regions of Malaysia, in a longitudinal or mixed-method approach to gain a better understanding of the perceived employability and its evolution over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research will serve as a basis for additional studies of perceived employability. Several areas could be explored in future research to expand the framework presented in this study, such as career adaptability, digital competence, work experience, professional networking, and career motivation. There are empirical findings in recent years that prove that career adaptability is a significant factor for graduate employability in Malaysia (Azalea et al., 2026) and that digital competence is another significant factor in graduate employability (Maskun et al., 2025). These factors could be explored further in future research as predictors, mediators, and/or moderators of perceived employability. In addition, both the longitudinal and mixed-method approaches are

recommended to gain a better understanding of the career experiences and employability development of graduates.

CONCLUSION

Self-efficacy and University Support were used to explain the influence on Perceived Employability in this study. The findings show that both are moderately influential, and the influence of University Support is a bit more. The findings suggest that there is a relationship between Perceived Employability and individual capability and institutional support. The study provides the university, MBA providers, policymakers, and graduates with useful suggestions about enhancing employability. Future studies should take larger samples, a longitudinal design, and include other factors of employability to get more comprehensive knowledge about Perceived Employability.

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