



TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MODERATING EFFECT OF GRIT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Rumo a um quadro conceitual para o efeito moderador do grit na relação entre o capital psicológico e a empregabilidade da pós-graduação

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ABSTRACT

The construct of graduate employability (GE) has received a considerable attention from researchers and policy makers because of its importance in attaining the national economic agenda. Human resource management researchers have identified and examined several antecedents of employability. To date, some of the factors that have been considered include soft skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills, among others. Despite this research efforts, only few studies have attempted to consider the influence of psychological capital (PsyCap) on GE. Even if any, they have reported conflicting findings. Therefore, a moderating variable is suggested. This paper proposes grit as potential moderator on the relationship between PsyCap and graduate employability.

Keywords: Graduate Employability, Psychological Capital, Grit, Human Capital Theory, Conceptual Framework.

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RUMO A UM QUADRO CONCEITUAL PARA O EFEITO MODERADOR DO GRIT NA RELAÇÃO ENTRE O CAPITAL PSICOLÓGICO E A EMPREGABILIDADE DA PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO

Towards a conceptual framework for the moderating effect of grit on the relationship between psychological capital and graduate employability

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RESUMO

O construto empregabilidade de graduados (EG) tem recebido atenção considerável de pesquisadores e formuladores de políticas devido à sua importância na consecução da agenda econômica nacional. Pesquisadores de gestão de recursos humanos identificaram e examinaram vários antecedentes da empregabilidade. Até o momento, alguns dos fatores considerados incluem soft skills, habilidades de comunicação e habilidades de resolução de problemas, entre outros. Apesar desses esforços de pesquisa, apenas alguns estudos tentaram considerar a influência do capital psicológico (PsyCap) no GE. Mesmo se houver, eles relataram resultados conflitantes. Portanto, uma variável moderadora é sugerida. Este artigo propõe o grit como potencial moderador na relação entre PsyCap e empregabilidade de graduados.

Palavras-chave: Empregabilidade de Pós-Graduação, Capital Psicológico, Garra, Teoria do Capital Humano, Estrutura Conceitual.

INTRODUCTION

The present-day employment landscape is continuously changing and profoundly affected by the uncertain economic climate and rapid technological advancement (Baruch et al., 2016). The economy today has influenced organisations to be driven by the ability to be flexible and adaptable (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008; Kasler et al., 2017). As the job market gradually deviates from guaranteed lifelong employment, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) argue the need for employees to consider alternative measures in obtaining or maintaining employment as a result of diminishing life-long employment and depreciating job security. Harvey (2005) postulates that employability should focus on the 'ability' through the development and learning process of the individual rather than on the 'employ' as in job attainment (Symington, 2012). Employability of humankind depends on their distinctive characteristics, robust knowledge and unique skills that become the differentiator among job seekers in the labour pool. Graduate students and the unemployed population need to be regularly conscious of the critical and essential employability factors that are required by the employers that are continuously changing. In the marketplace, it is inevitable to accept the difficulties faced in this era that has not been encountered previously or has intensified pressures currently experienced for employers, employees and other stakeholders. Students and graduates have realised the importance to be seen as employable due to increasing expectations from employers (Jackson, 2013). Employment of new graduates have become more complicated: 'a college education was once sufficient for the attainment of a good job. It is no longer sufficient, but at the same time, it is all the more necessary' (Smith, 1986).

It is important to investigate on the factors of graduate employability as it can assist students, graduates and employees to develop the competencies that are proven to help increase their chance of obtaining a job. In the extant literature, GE antecedents are mostly concentrated on skills-based competencies which indicates a lack of attention given on other plausible antecedents such as PsyCap. Forsythe (2017) argues insufficient findings examining the importance of personal competencies on graduate employability. Similarly, Egan (2016) supported the importance of unique individual characteristics in order to be recognised as employable to employers. To date, limited studies have analysed the influence of PsyCap on graduate employability (Bakari & Khoso, 2017; Kasler et al., 2017; Kim, 2016). This indicate the need for more research to further investigation to theorise the link between attainment of PsyCap and improved employability. With the existing studies available, conflicting findings were discovered which lead to the suggestion of incorporating a moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Henceforth, this study proposed grit as a potential moderating variable between psychological capital and graduate employability. Specifically, the relationship between PsyCap and graduate employability might be stronger for graduates possessing a high level of grit than those with low grit level. Moreover, literature published on graduate employability were predominantly conducted in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and Africa (Pheko & Molefhe, 2017; Shannon, 2012; Wilton, 2014). Chow et al. (2019) emphasise the need to investigate employability from a graduate's perspective as it remains as the under-researched area, mainly in the Asian context.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, this paper attempt to address the gap mentioned above by proposing PsyCap as a potential antecedent of graduate employability. PsyCap is proposed to be an important psychological competency that graduates need to possess. Acquisition of PsyCap among graduates is proposed to have a beneficial return that enable graduates to be seen as more attractive to the employers. Secondly, given that past research has produced conflicting findings on the impact of PsyCap on GE, this call for the introduction of a moderator. In this paper, grit is proposed to be the moderator that may influence the relationship between PsyCap and GE. Grit is chosen as it has been shown to have positive effect on various life outcomes among the high achievers. What these people have in common is grit thus, this paper propose grit as an added competencies needed by graduates in addition to PsyCap acquisition will have a positive impact on graduate employability. With grit as moderator between PsyCap and GE, a theoretical model is created around these constructs. This paper will present two propositions that is suggesting the need for future research to empirically prove propositions designed. Concurrently, this paper contribute to both conceptual and theoretical understanding on study of PsyCap, grit and GE.

1 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Definition of employability varies according to the context viewed such as socio-cultural, economic landscape, demographic area and time frame (Williams et al., 2015). A widely accepted definition coined by Yorke (2006) describes employability as 'a set of achievements such as skills, understandings, and personal attribute that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy'. The notion of employability and job readiness among graduates to be absorbed into the workforce has been one of the main agenda among policymakers (Tomlinson, 2007). The higher education institutions (HEIs) are particularly concerned about employability of their graduates as it reflect the image and quality of the institutions. For instance, university with a higher number of graduates being hired will portray corporate better image than other institution with high number of unemployed graduates. Graduates are increasingly expected to have the appropriate skills, attributes, creativity and knowledge that come as result of intensifying accentuation of student development to move according to the 'knowledge-driven' economy (Brown et al., 2003; Rätty et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2007). Mismatches between skills acquired by graduates and skills required by employers have grown to become more eminent, especially as employers disclosed their challenges in looking for skilled employees even in the society with the high number of unemployed (Yoong et al., 2016). Metaphorically, graduates are competing in a never-ending marathon to keep up with the latest skills and competencies required by the employers which are constantly changing in order to reach the finishing line, which refers to job attainment.

In an increasingly competitive workforce, graduates are responsible for taking initiatives in managing employability by leveraging their competencies to adapt to opportunities available (Hillage & Pollard, 1998) and adapt it according to the job requirements to attract their potential employers. As previously witnessed by the previous generation, academic qualifications obtained has allowed graduates to have an advantage in the labour market; however, this is no longer the case in the present time as it is more considered as necessary (Small et al., 2017). College degree is regarded as the basic requirement that one needed to apply for almost every job. Additionally, increasing attention placed on GE further increased its complexity as it compromised of various stakeholders (Bollerot, 2001; L. Harvey, 2001; Jackson, 2013; Meager, 2001; Yorke, 2006). This is because each stakeholder have own opinion on the context of employability which has led to mismatch of skills acquired by graduates than what was actually required of them. It is important to note that employability does not guarantee graduates to secure a job; however, it does increase individual's likelihood of filling a vacancy compared to others in the competitive labour market (Clarke, 2008).

Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004) share a similar view on the emergence concept of employability could be the critical contributor to career success. Fugate et al. (2004) also suggested the importance of employability especially in the unemployment context due to the three main reasons that the unemployed are less vulnerable to psychologically affected of job loss, higher engagement in job search and more likely to secure a better job. Additionally, Brown & Hesketh (2004) suggest graduates can develop their employability based on their experience, such as adapting experience that was obtained either academic-related or non-academic in order to meet the requirements of the organisation. Hinchliffe & Jolly (2011) support the previous statement as their study found no significant relation between skills developed at the university and a higher employment chances. This indicate employer's preference towards developable and transferable skills can be adapted in the workplace.

The concept of GE has been analysed from various stakeholders perspective including employers (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018; Finch et al., 2012; Maxwell et al., 2009), academicians (Kinash et al., 2016; Mutairi et al., 2014) and students (Donald et al., 2017; Su & Zhang, 2015). Extant literature on GE is also directed towards investigating its antecedents namely, practical experience (Pheko & Molefhe, 2017), teamwork ability (Cavanagh et al., 2015) and problem-solving skills (Maxwell et al., 2009), among others. A growing body of literature investigated the importance of possessing communication skill from various perspective, including students and employers. Studies by Adeyemo et al. (2010) and Maxwell et al. (2009) investigating employers' perspective identified communication skill as one of the emerging core skills expected from graduates. In another study, a study by Shannon (2012) on the perception of Australian employers on GE indicates communication skill to be essential, although it was found to be lacking among graduates. Communication skill is also chosen by graduates

to affect in enhancing their employability as proven by extant studies. One hundred sixty management graduates from India stated communication skill to have a significant impact on their employability (Shah & Srivastava, 2014). Additionally, in a sample of 257 geography graduates, (Hennemann & Liefner, 2010) found traditional syllabus did not necessarily prepare graduates adequately for their jobs as findings indicate graduates possessed more knowledge than required but lack necessary competences and transferable skills that the job market demands which includes communication skills, among others.

In a qualitative study among final year business students at an Australian university, most of them express their difficulties and challenging experience working in a team (Cavanagh et al., 2015). This reflects the need to improve their teamwork ability as it is an essential skill needed in the workplace. Additionally, Puhakka et al. (2010) conducted a large longitudinal study among 1294 recent graduates from various majors and revealed teamwork skills as few of the requisite skills needed in relation with their current work. Mihail and Elefterie (2006) investigated perception among management education graduates on the impact of undertaking an MBA course in assisting their current line of work. The findings revealed the course taken to have a positive impact on boosting their ability to work in a group. On the other side, a study among Australian employers found teamwork ability among other generic attributes to be lacking among graduates which were constantly seen during the recruitment process, training programs and during employment (Tempone et al., 2012). Shannon (2012) on her study investigating employability attributes among architecture graduates, found that employers consider problem-solving skills as the outmost relevant skill required of graduates that is crucial in managing projects. Similar findings from another study also revealed the ability to solve the problem as one of the non-technical skills frequently rated by employers (Tempone et al., 2012). In a study by Puhakka et al. (2010), graduates mostly prefer transferable skills over subject-specific factor to be prominently beneficial and relevant to their current jobs which also include problem-solving skills. Furthermore, Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010) and Tanius (2018) comparative studies found a notable difference in the perception of skill acquisition whereby employers expectations of problem-solving abilities on graduates were significantly higher than what was acquired by graduates.

Studies investigating the relationship between work experience and GE has demonstrated conflicting findings across the stakeholders. From the students perspective, Huang et al. (2014) study among Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom expressed experience related activities such as undertaking internship and working part-time as necessary in developing their employability. Similarly, fresh graduates from Tanzania placed high importance to practical experiences, such as work placement to be a significant factor that can lead to an enhanced employability of higher learning graduates (Nikusekela & Pallangyo, 2016). A recent study by Pheko and Molefhe (2017) mentioned the need for the university to provide opportunities to do voluntary work, part-time jobs, job internships before graduating from university to help the student increase their employability. While these studies have put forward the perception of graduates on the influence of work experience on their employability, a study by Chhinzer and Russo (2018) showed conflicting findings. This two-phased approach study that has explored employers perspective revealed work experience acquired by graduates to be uncorrelated with employability (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018).

2 PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a multi-dimensional construct that consists of four essential elements including self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience. Luthans et al. (2015) describe PsyCap as 'an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterised by (1) having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering towards goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success' (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). In layman terms, Luthans et al., (2007) describe PsyCap as the developing awareness of 'whom you are becoming' or 'your best self'. Avey et al. (2009) and Luthans, Avolio, et al. (2007) supports all components to load on higher-order core construct of PsyCap and

proven to have convergent and discriminant validity similar to other positive constructs such as self-evaluations and conscientiousness (Luthans et al., 2010).

Inevitably, students need to cope with global challenges such as uncertain economic climate and dynamic technological advancement (Siu et al., 2014). In an educational context, students who are the future employees and leaders have to cultivate PsyCap to survive the ever-changing landscape of labour market (Fred Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2007). Graduates with PsyCap acquisition have better tendency to learn quicker and adapt their skills accordingly which increases their possibility of being hired. Riolli et al. (2012) signify the role of PsyCap in coping with stressful events for students during their academic years, and the same also applies to the context of job hunting for graduates (Ortega-Maldonado & Salanova, 2018). In the extant literature, psychological capital has been linked to various positive outcomes in a variety of contexts including employee performance (Eid et al., 2012; Yildiz, 2018), career success (Chen & Lim, 2012; Drenzo et al., 2015) and student performance (Luthans et al., 2012; Luthans et al., 2016). Despite this, far too little attention has been paid towards investigating the influence of PsyCap on graduate employability namely by these scholars; Bakari and Khoso (2017), Chiesa et al. (2018), Kim (2016), Ngoma and Ntale (2016) and Rawat and Sharma (2018). As suggested by Siu et al. (2014), acquisition of PsyCap in students may lead to enrichment of study engagement and academic performance. Bullock-Yowell et al. (2011) proposed PsyCap as the conventional capability that is vital to individual motivation and thinking process that has a positive influence on job performance. Henceforth, PsyCap is suggested to have a similar effect on graduate employability. Therefore, it is acceptable to consider PsyCap as a valuable personal resource that students need to enhance their employability upon their graduation.

Hope

Snyder et al. (1991) defined hope as positive motivational disposition stemmed from two senses of success, including agency and pathways (Fred Luthans et al., 2004). Hope is an individual perception on their ability to accomplish the desired outcome that facilitates the development of effort and persistence towards goal accomplishment (Fred Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007). Agency indicates one's motivation and capability to initiate given tasks and move towards completion of the duty assigned (Luthans et al., 2010). While motivation has always been considered necessary in goal accomplishment, its role when individuals are faced with adversity and challenge is more prominent (Snyder, 2000). Motivational talks or quotes such that 'I can do this' or 'Nothing can stop me' are considered as the agentic aspect of hope (Luthans et al., 2010; Snyder et al., 1998). On the other hand, pathways thinking of hope theory is the capacity to create relevant directions to achieve the objectives (Snyder, 2000). Typically, individuals with high hope level are more likely to generate several pathways to goal accomplishment as precautions of any possible obstruction (Luthans et al., 2010). In employment setting, with goal of obtaining a job, hopeful jobseekers are able to resist through temptations and endure possible challenges in order to land a work interview or attain new job.

Several studies analysing the construct of hope have proven its validity across various cross-cultural settings, namely China (Luthans et al., 2005) and United States (Hinton, 2012), among others (Dawkins, 2014). Based on the body of literature, Gota (2017) concludes individual perceived control to determine the extent to which one is considered as hopeful. This statement is backed by Luthans (2002), who stated that individuals with high hope level are more motivated and ambitious to attain the desired objective compared to less hopeful individuals. In a similar vein, Adams et al. (2002) state hopeful individuals to be more successful as agentic thinking were utilised to sustain their motivation in pursuit of goal achievement (Avey et al., 2006; O'Reilly, 2016). There is a large volume of published studies that investigated the impact of hope on higher performance outcomes across diverse settings (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007; O'Reilly, 2016; Peterson & Luthans, 2003). In the academic context, students with high hope level have a higher tendency to outperform students with less hope (Adams et al., 2002; Gilman et al., 2006). The construct of hope has also been demonstrated to be positively related to job satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2004) and subsequently tend to be more happy and prosperous in their career (Adams et al., 2002; Barbosa, 2017). From the employer's lens, hopeful employees are beneficial to the firm as it increases the financial performance of the organisation (Peterson & Luthans, 2003) and enhances retention among staff (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). While hope has been linked with various outcomes, literature

considering the impact of hope on graduate employability is still lacking. One of the few studies investigating this relationship is by Hinton (2012), which revealed MBA students perception on hope to be beneficial in the enhancement of their employability.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the individual's beliefs on their abilities to muster motivation, leverage thinking abilities and execute actions needed to perform given task the successfully within the given context (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). The term self-efficacy can be used interchangeably with self-sufficiently (Gota, 2017; Sahin et al., 2014). The level of self-efficacy varies depending on the complexity of the specific task, while perceived efficacy relies on the individual's conviction in executing the assigned task (Zimmerman, 2000). In his seminal work, Bandura (1997) classified sources of efficacy sources into four headings, namely mastery experiences, vicarious modelling, social persuasion & positive feedback and physiological & psychological arousal.

Mastery experiences take place when individuals are provided with the opportunity to execute a specific task by themselves. Luthans et al. (2010) asserts that individual experience of accomplishment in challenging task may increase their efficacy belief in executing the same task in the future. For example in the context of employability, mastery experiences such as work experience and live presentation are more likely to build student's confidence in working in the future and doing a presentation as they have successfully done it before and become confident in doing it again. Furthermore, Bandura (1995) argues master experience to be the effective means in building a personal sense of confidence, which represent a crucial role in the concept of employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). The second source of efficacy development is vicarious learning, where individuals learn the assignment by observation or better known as modelling. The effectiveness of this method depends on the level of context to which the individual can relate closely to the role model who had completed the same task. A good example would be a visit of successful alumni to the university to share their success story about their goal accomplishment (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Meanwhile, Bandura (1997) added the credibility of the persuader in the eyes of the recipient would be an added effectiveness of this efficacy development technique.

The third source of efficacy is obtained from social persuasion or positive feedback. This mechanism of efficacy belief occurs when the individual belief on their possession of specific capabilities or skills required to execute a specific activity. This persuasion in exchange, encourage the individual to put extra energy and motivation to achieve their desired outcome. In an academic context, the tutor plays a particular role in giving feedback student's performance (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Finally, the last element of efficacy belief is the effect of physiological and psychological arousal. Luthans et al. (2010) provided a simple example by which the leader of the organisation who provides support and appreciation to their employees which helps prevent burnout among employees. Altogether, all of these efficacy sources assist in explaining the impact of efficacy on the outcome of performance in the workplace (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Efficacious individuals are exceptionally motivated in putting their continuous effort in challenging activities in order to accomplish their goals even when beset with obstacles as they view these tasks to be attainable rather than feeling overwhelmed about it (O'Reilly, 2016). Ojonugwa et al. (2015) asserted highly-efficacious people are more likely to succeed compared to individuals with low efficacy levels who will always doubt themselves about their ability, hence restricting their chances of succeeding. Driven by efficacious beliefs, individuals become tenacious and determined in overcoming any hurdles in pursuit of their goal accomplishment. In academic settings, Richardson et al. (2012) and Robbins et al. (2004) have demonstrated the importance of possessing self-efficacy as the predictor for retention and achievements among college students (Wolters & Hussain, 2014). Bandura (1997) has found evidence that self-efficacious students are more likely to put in more effort, stay longer in college and less emotional reactions (Zimmerman, 2000). In a similar vein, a graduate who put their effort and heart into a task have higher chances of obtaining a job in their chosen occupations compare to graduates with low efficacy level (Tiraieyari & Abdul Hamid, 2015). Few research have linked self-efficacy to employability across various research context. Findings by Nauta et al. (2002) revealed that relationship between employability and self-efficacy to be mutual. In another study, Tiraieyari & Abdul Hamid (2015) study revealed career self- efficacy to be positively related to employability orientation.

Resilience

The widespread use of the term resilience refers to 'the capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility' (Luthans, 2002; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2012). However, in the context of PsyCap, Luthans and Youssef-Morgan (2007) modified the term resilience as individual capability of going to hardship and difficulties to achieve success. Block and Kremer (1996) and Richardson (2002) state resilience to be the differentiating factor that are able to predict individual ability to recover from adversity. Several authors have reported analyses of trends in resilience that demonstrated its critical impact in many aspects of life-domains such as better recovery from various issues and higher ability to cope with post-trauma (Bonanno, 2004; Couto, 2003). Also, Santilli et al. (2017) conducted a study that found the ability of resilient individual to handle challenging experiences, such as dealing with traumatic events and uncertainties. Masten and Tellegen (2012) research support the previous statement as the findings shown that more resilient individuals have a higher level of adaptability, which explains their ability to utilise their capacities in handling challenging situations (Coetzee & Engelbrecht, 2019). This is also applicable for graduates in pursuit of job hunting as they need to adapt their skills and competencies to fit the opportunity available. Relevant to the workplace, resilience is found to be positively associated with job performance (F. Luthans et al., 2005) and organisational commitment (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2007). Additionally, resilient workers are reported to show broader indicators of their well-being compared to less resilient workers as resilient workers are more satisfied with their jobs and able to better cope with job tension (Lengelle et al., 2017; Tugate & Fredrickson, 2004). Scales et al. (2006) investigation on resilience found its connection with academic success as students with higher resiliency have more inclination to obtain higher GPA scores. When faced with difficulties or failure, resilient individual will not give and persist until the end and this is the attitude that every graduate need to have in the competitive world of work.

Optimism

In one of his seminal work on positive psychology, Seligman (1998) define optimism as 'positive explanatory style that attributes positive events to personal, permanent and pervasive causes and interprets negative events in terms of external, temporary and situation-specific factors' (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2012). In simpler term, optimism is about believing that good things will take place (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Optimistic individuals are better at accepting and coping with challenges as the optimists have their self-belief of succeeding in any of the difficulties faced (Carver & Scheiver, 2002). 'Every cloud has a silver lining' is a saying that every optimist live by as they always look at the positive side of any challenges that are facing them. Optimistic characteristics are theorised to possess both state-like and trait-like resource (Dawkins, 2014). Several authors have justified optimism as a state-like resource as it was proven to remain stable in an individual across time and context (Carver & Scheiver, 2002; Schulman et al., 1993). Although it has been shown to have a state-like characteristic, individuals can operate their optimism to different degrees towards the higher end of their capabilities which is known as 'learned optimism' (Larson & Luthans, 2006).

Extant literature has demonstrated positive relationships between optimism and various job-related performance. In (Seligman, 1998)1998, Seligman's study on optimism among insurance sales agents found sales representatives with high optimism level outsold their pessimistic colleagues with a margin of 37%. In a similar vein, research on Chinese factory workers also found optimism to be highly correlated with their performance rating (Luthans et al., 2005). Furthermore, Youssef and Luthans (in media) point out that being a more optimistic employee may influence employee's performance evaluations, work happiness and job satisfaction (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007). Optimism is also found to moderate the relationship between job characteristics and job strain as optimistic employees are less likely to undergo stress at their workplace (Totterdell et al., 2006). Solberg et al. (2009) found optimist students to outperform their pessimist's friends in school. Based on the aforementioned studies on PsyCap and graduate employability, the following proposition is put forward:

Proposition 1: Psychological capital will have a positive significant relationship with graduate employability.

Grit

According to the definition provided by Duckworth et al. (2007) grit is 'perseverance and passion for long-term goals and entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over the years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress'. Duckworth et al. (2007) further characterised the personality trait of grit into two dimensions, namely consistency of interest and perseverance of effort. Consistency of interest refers to individual ability to continuously focus on their target in achieving the desired aspiration, even if it takes a longer time. While perseverance of effort concerns about the endurance of individual to challenges and uncertainties while maintaining the consistent effort to achieve long-term goals (Datu et al., 2016). Grit is a rather stable characteristic found in an individual, closely related to the traditional personality attributes and profoundly influence the individual's attitudes and behaviour over diverse settings (Angela Lee Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Kleiman et al., 2013; Reed et al., 2013; Wolters & Hussain, 2014). Based on cross-sectional analyses by Duckworth & Eskreis-Winkler (2013), grit is a trait that increases monotonically during adulthood as people grow old, they have a growing appreciation on the efficacy of effort (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). The construct of grit was originally derived from a study by Duckworth et al. (2007) on the investigation of what set apart the high achievers from others since neither IQ or talent was sufficient enough to explain the difference of these two categories of people (Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2015). Grit has been able to better predict successful outcome compared to other constructs such as IQ and conscientiousness (Duckworth et al., 2007; Reed et al., 2013; Vainio & Daukantaitė, 2015).

Duckworth et al. (2007) asserted grit as a personality trait tied closely with motivation and hardiness. This notion of this trait explains why grittier individuals are able to be successful in attaining their goals compared to others with lower possession of grit. In the academic context, grittier students are argued to have higher perseverance and endurance level while maintaining consistent effort in pursuit of long-term goal such as acquiring a college degree. Hence, grit can be used to explain academic success among university students (Bowman et al., 2015; Angela Lee Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Strayhorn, 2013). Subsequently, grit has tangible advantages to both employers and employees as the employers often prefer to hire candidates that are hardworking more than they are intelligent (Duckworth, 2016). Past studies on grit have proven its positive influence in completion of various important life goals such as higher employee performance (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014), tolerance to increased exercise intensity (Reed et al., 2013), reduced suicidal intention (Kleiman et al., 2013), retention of military cadets (Duckworth et al., 2007), among others. Securing a job in the competitive marketplace requires individual to maintain consistent effort in looking for job advertisement, remain motivated even when one is rejected from a job, persevere through countless work interviews are some of illustration on how grit is applied in the context of job seeking. Duckworth et al. (2007) further suggested that more evidence is required to understand better how grit interacts with other factors to explain the achievement of long-term goals and in this matter, the extent to which it can predict graduate employability.

3 HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY (HCT)

Becker (1964) define the term human capital as 'the stock of knowledge, habits, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in the ability to perform labour to produce economic value'. This theory is originated from three general assumptions including the primary role of formal education is to provide students with adequate skills and knowledge that correspond to the need of employers, selection of educated workers must be executed efficiently and lastly, the productivity of individuals at work will reflect in their earnings (Al-Azri, 2016). Becker (1962) describes human capital as knowledge and skills individual possessed through training or schooling, which are perceived to be contributing to the production process. Hence, this capital is part of the individual and cannot be separated as it creates favourable outcomes either to the individual or others. Henceforth, this aspect portrays the concept of employability by which employees are providing added value to the employers using the skills and knowledge possessed. From this lens, the extent to which competencies attained allows graduates to strive towards their desired job (Williams et al., 2015).

Berntson et al. (2006) asserted the human capital theory explain the attainment of knowledge and competency among individuals to have a positive relationship with employability. They further suggested that

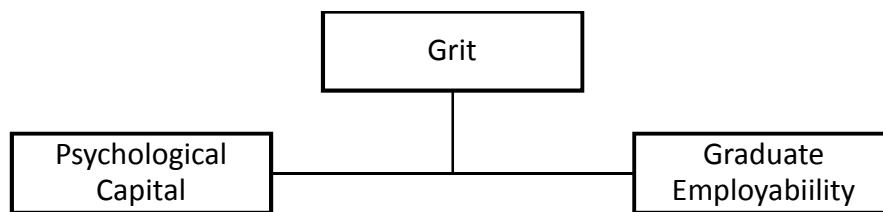
HCT mainly focused on the individualistic view of employability. Continuous learning, work experience and learned skills are some of the forms of investment in personal development (McArdle et al., 2007) is also a form of human capital that can increase the level of employability in an individual (Al-Azri, 2016; Jackson, 2013). HCT also explains that the result of the investment in the attainment of competencies will have a positive impact on the individual, society and economy (Jackson, 2013). Applying this HCT to the context of this conceptual paper, therefore, proposes acquisition of human capital (i.e. psycap and grit) will lead to increase graduate employability (Jackson, 2013). Hence, increasing individual chances of obtaining the desired job in the current competitive market. In return, this will benefit themselves, employers, society and economy (Wittekind et al., 2010). Based on the aforementioned literature, this study proposes the following:

Proposition 2: Grit will moderate the relationship between Psychological Capital and Graduate Employability.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 is designed based on the extant literature and theory reviewed in this paper.

Figure 1 - Conceptual model of graduate employability.



4 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Future research can expand this conceptual framework by empirically examining the recommendations suggested in this paper. This paper also provide insights to utilisation of existing or new measures of the constructs (i.e PsyCap, grit , GE) to conduct empirical research in testing the model. By building upon the extant stream of literature on graduate employability, this paper provides new insights with the introduction of new antecedents such as PsyCap and grit. This paper provided graduate employability model based on Human Capital Theory in which PsyCap is the independent variable and grit is the moderator. Incorporating grit as a potential moderator could contribute to new theoretical understanding and present empirical evidence on existing GE literature.

5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper intend to contribute to the student and graduate population on the importance of acquiring PsyCap and grit in attaining a job. It is posited that PsyCap is notably essential in today's workplace that requires resilience and determination in order to seek a competitive advantage in the labour market (Siu et al., 2014). Additionally, grit has also proven to be linked with various life-goals achievements, such as job attainment in the competitive labour market (Kasler et al., 2017). Individual in active job-seeking can utilise or develop these competencies and apply it in their journey of job hunting. The model in this paper is also relevant to the academicians as they can help students to develop this greater sense of PsyCap and grit in their studies and subsequently after graduation. In the competitive labour market, possession of psycap and grit can act as a differentiator factor among others in the labour pool. Additionally, this paper give contribution to application of

grit in the Asian context as most of the studies on grit were mostly conducted in the West, which has different socio-cultural settings (Datu et al., 2016)

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