MODERATING EFFECT OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT ATTRIBUTES, SOCIAL SUPPORT, PERCEIVED STRESS AND INTENTION-TO-COMPLETE DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMME

By

RENU D/O RAMALINGGAM

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ii

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ABSTRACT

Student dropout in the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme has emerged as the main barrier in achieving the targeted 60,000 doctoral graduates as envisioned in the 10th Malaysia Plan. The dropout rate shows that almost 80 percent of the DBA students did not complete the programme within the stipulated time frame. However, there has not been much research focused on doctoral programme completion in Malaysia. Hence, this study investigated the determinant factors of intention to complete DBA in Malaysia. Specifically, the aim of this study was to examine whether student attributes, social support and perceived stress determine the intention to complete DBA. Additionally, the moderating effect of programme characteristics on the proposed relationships was examined in this study. The survey method was employed to collect data for this study. DBA students who had completed at least two semesters of their studies in Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia and Universiti Utara Malaysia were chosen as respondents for this study. Seven research hypotheses were proposed in relation to the determinants of intention to complete the doctoral study. Structured questionnaires comprising 42 questions were used to measure the four independent variables and one moderating variable. Out of the 750 questionnaires sent out, only 413 were returned and usable, thus yielding a response rate of 55.1 percent. The findings revealed that positive relationships exist between student attributes, social support and intention to complete DBA. Unfortunately, perceived stress was not indicative of any significant relationship with intention to complete DBA. The findings also revealed that programme characteristics moderate the relationship between student attributes and intention to complete DBA. The study concluded with a discussion on theoretical and practical implications and suggestion for future research.

Keywords: Intention to complete DBA, programme characteristics, student attributes, social support, perceived stress.

ABSTRAK

Keciciran pelajar dalam program Doktor Pentadbiran Perniagaan (DBA) telah muncul sebagai penghalang utama dalam mencapai sasaran 60,000 orang siswazah kedoktoran seperti yang dihasratkan dalam Rancangan Malaysia ke-10. Kadar keciciran menunjukkan hampir 80 peratus pelajar DBA tidak menamatkan program dalam tempoh masa yang ditetapkan. Walau bagaimanapun, tiada banyak kajian yang telah memberi fokus kepada penamatan pengajian program kedoktoran di Malaysia. Justeru itu, kajian ini telah menyelidik faktor-faktor penentu niat untuk menamatkan pengajian DBA di Malaysia. Secara khususnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik sama ada atribut pelajar, sokongan sosial dan faktor tekanan menentukan niat untuk menamatkan program DBA. Selain itu, kesan penyederhana ciri-ciri program ke atas hubungan-hubungan yang dicadangkan telah dikaji dalam kajian ini. Kaedah kajian tinjauan telah diguna pakai untuk mengumpul data untuk kajian ini. Pelajar-pelajar DBA yang telah menamatkan sekurang-kurangnya dua semester daripada pengajian mereka di Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia dan Universiti Utara Malaysia telah dipilih sebagai responden untuk kajian ini. Tujuh hipotesis kajian telah dicadangkan berkaitan penentu niat menamatkan pengajian kedoktoran. Soal selidik berstruktur yang terdiri daripada 42 soalan telah digunakan untuk mengukur empat pemboleh ubah bebas dan satu pemboleh ubah penyederhana. Namun, daripada 750 soal selidik yang telah diedarkan, hanya 413 telah dikembalikan dan sesuai digunakan. Oleh itu, kadar maklum balas adalah sebanyak 55.1 peratus. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa wujud hubungan positif di antara atribut pelajar, sokongan sosial dan niat untuk menamatkan DBA. Malangnya, faktor tekanan tidak menunjukkan sebarang hubungan signifikan dengan niat untuk menamatkan pengajian DBA. Dapatan kajian juga mengetengahkan bahawa ciri-ciri program menyederhana hubungan di antara atribut pelajar dan niat untuk menamatkan pengajian DBA. Kajian ini dirumuskan dengan perbincangan mengenai implikasi teori dan praktikal serta cadangan untuk kajian akan datang.

Kata Kunci: Niat untuk menamatkan DBA, ciri-ciri program, atribut pelajar, sokongan sosial, tekanan

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Malaysia has been working towards an aspiration to be a high-income nation by 2020 capitalising on knowledge based economy which requires knowledgeable human capital. The 10th Malaysia Plan (2010) has indicated strongly the need to produce doctoral scholars in Malaysia. In fact, the Prime Minister of Malaysia has personally charged the then Higher Education Ministry with the responsibility of producing 60000 PhD scholars by 2023. To achieve this, the government has worked out a financial strategy through Ministry of Higher Education to fund lifelong learning via a program called MyBrain15. Through this program the government is aiming to achieve the mandate and produce an excellent pool of highly skilled scholars and research leaders. In accordance with that plan, doctoral studies are funded fully by the government and so far, around RM386 million has been utilized with remaining allocation of RM 112 million (The Star, 2014).

Among various doctoral programmes, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is a popular professional doctorate in business administration for business professionals. The growth of professional doctorates is a new sensation in the education community which has held the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) as the gold standard in education since the 18th century. The doctoral education is expected to answer the demands and expectations set for it, these are being set also by the future scholars (Boud & Lee, 2009). After an initial sceptical reaction, the academic world has now embraced PhD

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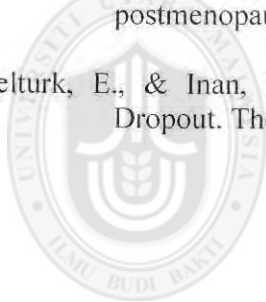
APPENDIX 1: STUDY QUESTIONAIRRE

SECTION A – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is your current age?

Age (in years):

□ 25 to 30

□ 31 to 40

□ 41 to 50

□ 51 and above

What is your gender?

□ Male

□ Female

How do you describe your primary ethnicity?

□ Malay

□ Indian

□ Chinese

Other (please specify)

_____

Enrollment status:

□Part time

□Full time

What is your current employment status? (Check all that apply)

□ Not in labor force

□ Employed (full-time)

□ Employed (part-time)

□ Pursuing further studies (i.e. postdoctoral research, other degree)

Other (please specify) _____ _____

What semester are you in your DBA program?

_____

SECTION B - INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ATTRIBUTES (SA)

In your perception, what are the possible reasons that impede completion of DBA program? Please tick the box that best represents your response.

Items	Not at all Important	Of little Importance	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Couldn't afford to continue studies					
Doctoral studies is too difficult					
False impression of dissertation demands during early candidature					
Lack of motivation to continue dissertation after coursework					
Demands on my family					
Demands on my job					
Program not to my liking					
Program did not fit my career goals					
Change in career after coursework completion					

Other reasons: _____

SECTION C - PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS (PC)

As you look back over your doctoral studies, how satisfied are you with each of the following statements concerning departmental assistance?Please tick the box that best represents your response.

Please rate each of the following statements:

Items	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Faculty availability in your program					
Access to research materials					
Quality of research material					
Support and advice from staff of department					
Support and advice from faculty of dept					
Availability of courses					
Information about program requirements					
Coursework as an assistance to dissertation preparation					
Selection of dissertation topic					
Selection of supervisor					
Supervisor role in Preparation of proposal					
Guidance from supervisor					
Dissertation writing					
Accessibility of supervisor					

Others: _____

SECTION D - PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE (PSS)

Instructions: The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the lastmonth. In each case, please indicate with a check how often you felt or thought a certain way.

In the last month:

Items	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly					
How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life					
How often have you felt nervous and "stressed"					
How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems					
How often have you felt that things were going your way					
How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do					
How often have you been able to control irritations in your life					
How often have you felt that you were on top of things					

How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control					
How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them					

Others: _____

Perceived Stress Scale Scoring

PSS-10 scores are obtained by reversing the scores on the four positive items, e.g., 0=4, 1=3,2=2, etc. and then summing across all 10 items. Items 4,5, 7, and 8 are the positively stateditems.

The PSS was designed for use with community samples with at least a junior high schooleducation, The items are easy to understand and the response alternatives are simple to grasp.Moreover, as noted above, the questions are quite general in nature and hence relatively free ofcontent specific to any sub population group. The data reported in the article are from somewhatrestricted samples, in that they are younger, more educated and contain fewer minority membersthan the general population. In light of the generality of scale content and simplicity of language and response alternatives, we feel that data from representative samples of the general population would not differ significantly from those reported below

SECTION E -MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT (SSP)

(adapted from Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)

Instructions: We are interested to how you feel about the following statements. Read eachstatement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

Items	Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a special person who is around when I am in need (SO)					
There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows (SO)					
My family really tries to help me (Fam)					
I get the emotional help and support I need from my family (Fam)					
I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me (SO)					
My friends really try to help me (Fri)					
I can count on my friends when things go wrong (Fri)					
I can talk about my problems with my family)Fam)					
I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows (Fri)					
There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings (SO)					
My family is willing to help me make decisions (Fam)					
I can talk about my problems with my friends (Fri)					

Others: _____

The items tended to divide into factor groups relating to the source of the social support, namely family (Fam), friends (Fri) or significant other (SO).

SECTION F - INTENTION TO COMPLETE DBA

Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements on intention-to-complete DBA program. Please tick the box that best represents your response.

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would					
I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend this program					
I frequently think of dropping out of this program					

Others: _____

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