

## **The Outcomes of Work-Integrated Learning Programmes: The Role of Self-Confidence as Mediator between Interpersonal and Self-Management Skills and Motivation to Learn**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is regarded as an important vehicle to assist undergraduates' employability skills, knowledge, and attributes that can add value to their learning, career aspiration and employability. There is limited research on the outcomes of WIL programmes in terms of undergraduates' personal and psychological attributes, and motivation to learn. This study examines the relationship between self-management and interpersonal skills, self-confidence, and motivation to learn through a survey of 383 business degree undergraduates from five Malaysian public universities who have participated in various WIL programmes. Results show that the students' motivation to learn is influenced by their self-management and interpersonal skills and mediated by their self-confidence. This finding provides a valuable insight into the outcomes of WIL programmes such as personal and psychological attributes and motivation to learn in order to ensure the effectiveness of WIL programmes in producing employable and lifelong learning graduates.

*Keywords:* Interpersonal skills, motivation to learn, self-confidence, self-management skills, work-integrated learning

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, lifelong or continuous learning has been regarded as one of the important factors related to a graduate's employability and career development. Employability has been defined as a "psychological construct that embodies

individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour, affect, and the individual-work interface” (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004, p.15). Employable individuals do not only engage in their jobs and careers solely to meet demands of the environment, but they also proactively create and realise external opportunities. Fugate and Kinicki (2008) argued that individuals with a high motivation to learn will effectively identify opportunities; practise lifelong learning; and make necessary changes to enhance their employment prospects. High motivation to learn is also related to self-regulated competencies (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Employability of graduates in Malaysia have long been a concern for the government, higher education providers, industry, and academic researchers. According to Ministry of Higher Education, majority of the 220,527 graduates in 2012 (mostly from public institutions of higher education) had not secured jobs within six months upon graduating (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). The World Bank report in 2013 showed that one in five degree holders in Malaysia under the age of 25 were unemployed (Sander, Jalil, & Ali, 2013). Furthermore, academic achievements were no longer the main criteria for employers in recruiting fresh graduates (Selvadurai, Choy, & Maros, 2012). In order to mitigate this problem, higher education providers in Malaysia have been actively promoting student participation in work-integrated learning (WIL) programmes as a component of their curriculum to complement their theoretical knowledge and as a part of

their education agenda to enhance graduate employability (Jainudin, Francis, Tawie, & Matarul, 2015; Khalid et al., 2014; Maelah, Muhammaddun Mohamed, Ramli, & Aman, 2014; Saat, Yusoff, & Panatik, 2014).

The WIL refers to a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with practice within a purposefully designed curriculum” (Patrick et al., 2008, p.6). The WIL is part of a curriculum that involves experience gained within a workplace setting (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). The WIL programmes involve a range of activities such as 1) work experience or internship or placements; 2) volunteering or community engagement; 3) professional association membership or engagement; 4) attending networking or industry information events; 5) international exchanges; 6) mentoring; and 7) engaging in extracurricular activities (Elijido-Ten & Kloot, 2015; Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014; Jackson, 2015; Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Rowe, Mackaway, & Winchester-Seeto, 2012). Studies that examine the benefits of WIL have primarily focused on its economic and monetary benefits for various stakeholders such as employers, higher education providers, industry, and students. However, only a few studies have examined the effect of an undergraduate’s learning outcomes or certain psychological attributes after participating in WIL programmes. Also, nearly all the studies related to WIL have been conducted within developed countries, so very little is known about its utility in developing countries such as Malaysia.

The rationale for undertaking this research is to investigate whether a graduate's employability can be boosted through the outcomes of WIL programmes including enhancing personal attributes (e.g. self-management and interpersonal skills); psychological attributes (e.g. self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem) as well as learning outcomes (e.g. motivation to learn) (Drysdale et al., 2016; Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Oliver, 2015; Smith & Worsfold, 2014; Yorra, 2014). The first objective of this study is to determine the relationship between the undergraduate's personal attributes (e.g. interpersonal skills and self-management skills) and his or her motivation to learn. The second objective is to examine the relationship between undergraduates' psychological attributes (e.g. self-confidence) and their personal attributes as well as their motivation to learn. The third objective is to investigate the influence of the undergraduates' personal attributes (e.g. interpersonal skills and self-management skills) on their motivation to learn where their psychological attribute (e.g. self-confidence) is used as a mediator.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The WIL offers many benefits to undergraduates (Dressler & Keeling, 2011). Students who have participated in WIL tend to make informed decisions with regard to their career direction and feel more certain of their career choices (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). In terms of academic benefits, WIL has increased students' ability to put theories into practice (Allen & Peach, 2007). The

students also tend to be more analytical in problem solving (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011) and are more disciplined in their thinking (Fleming & Eames, 2005). In relation to personal benefits, WIL has increased students' confidence both in undertaking further research work and in applying for a job (DeLorenzo, 2000; Zegwaard & McCurdy, 2014). Research on WIL programmes in Malaysia have generally focused on undergraduates' industrial internship programmes. Maelah et al. (2014), Renganathan, Ambri Bin Abdul Karim, and Su Li (2012), Saat et al. (2014), Cheong, Yahya, Shen, and Yen (2014) and Jainudin et al. (2015) have analysed the perception of undergraduates with regard to benefit of internship programmes and skills developed as well as ethical awareness and experience gained. Khalid et al. (2014), Maelah et al. (2014) and Jainudin et al. (2015) have examined the firms' and universities' perception in relation to the benefits of WIL programmes. Nevertheless, those studies did not investigate in detail the outcomes of WIL's programmes such as personal attributes, psychological attributes and specific learning outcome (Drysdale et al., 2016).

### **Motivation to Learn (Specific Learning Outcomes)**

**An individual's** motivation to learn may be regarded as "internal, a naturally occurring capacity of human being that is enhanced and nurtured by quality supportive relationships, opportunities for personal choice and responsibility for learning, and personally

relevant and meaningful learning tasks” (McCombs, 1991, pp.120). According to McCombs (1991), motivation to learn refers to an individual’s desire to participate in the lifelong learning or continuous learning activity. Motivation to learn may be considered as the most important aspect of student’s employability, career self-management, career development learning and work-integrated learning (Jackson & Wilton, 2016 ; Smith et al., 2009; Patton & McMahon, 2014). This is similar with autonomous motivation and self-regulation orientation. Undergraduates with a high motivation to learn will be more motivated to excel in their job performance, will persevere despite job-related stress, and are consistent in their actions when confronted with difficult situations. In addition, they will also pursue continuous or lifelong learning opportunities during their employment and plan their future career as well as willing to change to meet situational demand. Studies have shown that WIL programmes have increased students’ motivation to learn in terms of lifelong or continuous learning, career motivation and upward mobility (Dressler & Keeling, 2004; Drysdale et. al. 2007; Freudenberg et al., 2010; Jackson, 2015; Jackson and Wilton, 2016; Kato and Hirose, 2008; Litchfield et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008).

### **Self-Management Skills (Personal Attributes)**

Self-management skills are related to an individual’s perception and appraisal of themselves in terms of values, abilities,

interests and goals (Bridgstock, 2009). Self-management is part of emotional intelligence, where a person has the maturity to gauge his strengths and weaknesses and will avoid blaming others or their environment when faced with challenging situations (De Janasz & Godshalk, 2013). Individuals with good self-management skills have the capability to curb adverse feelings and align their moods accordingly, always remain assured and confident, despite difficulty or hardships (Daft, Kendrick, & Vershinina, 2010). Self-management skills are also associated with other components such as personal drive and resilience, balancing work or life issues, self-awareness, goal setting, management, creativity and innovation, and self-confidence (Hellriegel et al., 2008).

Earlier studies have posited that prospective employers assume undergraduates acquire self-management skills including realistic appraisal of their own values, abilities, interest and goals (Bridgstock, 2009). Self-management skills are also associated with the concept of career management competencies (career self-management) which is a key factor for employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Some studies have reported that WIL has intensified undergraduates’ self-management skills (Drysdale & McBeath, 2014; Fleming & Eames, 2005; Jackson, 2015). Individuals with self-management skills may also have a high level of motivation to learn (Bembenutty, 2011) and have high career management competencies (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). Self-management skills through self-awareness provide

individuals with the ability to capitalise on their strengths while managing their weaknesses and having a balanced sense of self-confidence (Daft et al., 2010). Therefore, the first and second hypotheses are as below:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Undergraduates' self-management skills affect their self-confidence.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Undergraduates' self-management skills affect their motivation to learn.

### **Interpersonal Skills (Personal Attributes)**

Interpersonal skills are related to life skills people use every day to connect and relate to others, both at the personal and collective levels. Those skills include 1) verbal communication (e.g. the language we use and the manner in which we express ourselves) 2) non-verbal communication (e.g. what we communicate to others through body language, facial expressions, and gestures); 3) listening skills (e.g. our ability to interpret both the verbal and non-verbal messages); 4) negotiation skills (e.g. being congenial when working with others); 5) problem solving (e.g. overcoming challenges by involving others to find solutions that are acceptable to all); 6) decision making (e.g. weighing available options for sound decisions); and 7) assertiveness (e.g. being vocal and clear in expressing one's values, beliefs, opinions, needs or wants) (Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Syed, Abiodullah, &

Yousaf, 2014). Recent studies have shown that employers worldwide are looking for graduates with good interpersonal skills (e.g. experience within the industry) (Humburg, van der Velden, & Verhagen, 2013; Omar, Manaf, Mohd, Kassim, & Aziz, 2012; Singh, Thambusamy, & Ramly, 2014). This is because effective teamwork is important in any industry, namely collaboration and participation with co-workers. Previous studies have reported that undergraduates who participated in WIL developed good interpersonal skills such as interpersonal communication skills (Eames & Cates, 2011) and enhanced their ability to work within teams (Ferns et al., 2014). Interpersonal skills are also related to self-confidence (Syed et al., 2014). Research has also indicated that undergraduates with good interpersonal skills have a strong motivation to learn (Lashley, 2012).

The following hypotheses are posited:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Undergraduates' interpersonal skills affect their self-confidence.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Undergraduates' interpersonal skills affect their motivation to learn.

### **Self-Confidence (Psychological Attributes)**

Self-confidence may be described in two categories such as state and traits. State-confidence can be defined as "in the moment" belief about being able to perform the task while trait-confidence refers to a

dispositional feeling about being able to perform a task (Vealey, 1986). The two major assumptions of self-confidence are vital in identifying a person's confidence level and the approaches required to boost his or her confidence level. The concept of self-confidence has been used interchangeably with the concept of self-efficacy. Nevertheless, Bandura (1986) argues that both concepts are quite different; self-confidence refers to the strength of the belief or conviction but it does not reach the level of perceived competence while self-efficacy is related to the level of perceived competence and the strength of the belief. Self-efficacy perspective (Bandura, 1977), competence motivation perspective (Harter, 1978) and movement confidence perspective (Griffin & Keogh, 1982) view self-confidence as a critical mediator of motivation and behaviour. Heydarei and Daneshi (2015) argued that students with strong motivation to learn have high levels of self-confidence. Previous studies have found that undergraduates who participated in WIL have higher levels of overall self-confidence (Drysdale et al., 2007). The WIL also increased student confidence in their ability to undertake further research work (Zegwaard & McCurdy, 2014), and improved confidence when applying for job (Reddan, 2008). Furthermore, according to Rao (2010), generic skills such as interpersonal and self-management skills build self-confidence and increase undergraduates' motivation to learn. Varghese et al. (2012) in their model of effective WIL programmes points out

that sequencing is an important dimension in WIL because it shows the way skills and knowledge should be structured so there is value and meaning to undergraduates' learning outcomes. Therefore, we developed the research framework (see Figure 1) by sequencing the outputs of WIL's programmes (e.g. undergraduates' personal attributes, psychological attributes, and learning outcomes) based on the perspectives of the undergraduates who have already participated in the programmes. The following hypotheses were developed:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** Undergraduates' self-confidence affects their motivation to learn.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6):** Undergraduates' self-management skills indirectly affect their motivation to learn through self-confidence.

**Hypothesis 7 (H7):** Undergraduates' interpersonal skills indirectly affect their motivation to learn through self-confidence.

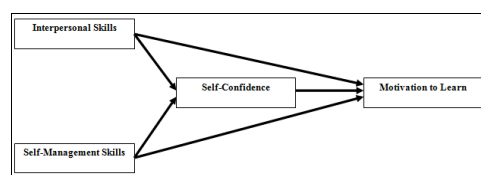


Figure 1. Research framework

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The participants selected as respondents for this study were Business degree students who have participated in various WIL

Table 1  
*Questions used in the study*

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Motivation to Learn

- 1) When learning a new concept, I attempt to understand them.
- 2) When learning a new concept, I connect them to my previous experiences.
- 3) When I make a mistake, I try to find out why.
- 4) When I encounter something new that I do not understand, I still try to learn about them.
- 5) When a new concept that I have learned conflict with my previous understanding, I try to understand why that is so.
- 6) When I do not understand something new, I would discuss with colleagues to clarify my understanding.
- 7) When I do not understand something, I find relevant resources that will help me.

Self-Confidence

- 1) I have control over my own life.
- 2) I am easy to like.
- 3) I never feel down for very long.
- 4) I am not embarrassed to let people know my opinions.
- 5) If a task is difficult, that makes me all the more determined.
- 6) I feel emotionally mature.
- 7) I like myself even when others don't.

Self-Management Skills

- 1) My ability to lead a project.
- 2) My ability to supervise group members.
- 3) My ability to optimise the use of resources.
- 4) Good time management.
- 5) My ability to plan, coordinate and organise a project.
- 6) My ability to plan and implement an action plan.
- 7) My ability to work independently.
- 8) My ability to work under pressure.
- 9) My ability to deliver expected results.

Interpersonal Skills

- 1) My ability to work & contribute to the group & team.
  - 2) My ability to understand other people's problems, emotions, concerns, and feelings, related to works.
  - 3) My ability to negotiate with subordinates or colleagues.
  - 4) My ability to encourage and motivate others.
  - 5) My ability to network.
  - 6) My ability to work in diverse environment (different ethnic group, religion & gender).
  - 7) My ability to deal with superiors.
  - 8) My ability to manage others.
-

programmes, including 1) internship/ placement/practicum; 2) industrial attachment; 3) research assistantship (paid/unpaid); 4) teaching assistantship; 5) job shadowing; 6) volunteering (community service); and 7) study abroad. They are both male and female students from five Malaysian public universities.

### Survey Instruments

The questionnaire contains four constructs (Refer Table 1), including 1) motivation to learn (seven items) adopted from Tuan, Chin, and Shieh (2005); 2) self-confidence (seven items) adopted from Shrauger's (1995) Personal Evaluation Inventory (PEI); 3) interpersonal skills (eight items) adopted from Abdul Hamid, Islam, and Abd Manaf (2014); and 4) self-management skills (nine items) adopted from Abdul Hamid et al. (2014). The constructs were measured based on 5-point Likert scale where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, and 5= Strongly agree.

### Procedure

This study employs a purposive sampling technique as it targets a specific group of respondents. A drop and collect method was used for data collection. A total of 500 questionnaires was distributed to respondents with the cooperation of the business faculty's internship coordinator. The 383 completed sets (representing 76.7%) were collected from the internship coordinators after two months.

### Statistical Analysis

The usable questionnaires met the rule of thumb whereby the minimum number of respondents was in a 10 to 1 ratio of latent variables to be tested (Chin, 1998; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The SmartPLS 2.0 software was used to evaluate the relationship among the constructs of the research model by conducting partial least square (PLS) analysis. Data was analysed using the guidelines provided by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) based on the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. The theoretical model was analysed in a two-step process: measurement model and the structural model (Chin, 2010). In assessing the measurement model, we examined the validity and reliability of the relationships between the latent variables (LV) and any associated observable variables. In assessing the structural model, we accounted for the relationships between the theoretical constructs.

## RESULTS

### Respondent Profiles

As shown in Table 2, 89 respondents were males (23.2%) and 294 were females (76.8%). A total of 370 (96.6%) respondents did an internship/ placement/practicum; 26 (6.8%) had undergone industrial attachment; 8 (2.1%) had undergone research assistantship (paid/unpaid); 12 (3.15 %) had undergone teaching assistantship; 4 (1%) had undergone job shadowing; 61 (15.9 %)



Table 2  
*Profile of respondents*

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
1) Male	89	23.2
2) Female	294	76.8
Training Programmes Involved		
1) Internship/placement/practicum	370	96.6
2) Industrial attachment	26	6.8
3) Research assistantship (paid/unpaid)	8	2.1
4) Teaching assistantship	12	3.1
5) Job shadowing	4	1.0
6) Volunteering (community service)	61	15.9
7) Study abroad	7	1.8

had undergone volunteering (community service) and 7 (1.8%) had undergone study-abroad programmes.

### Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated by examining the reliability of the individual items, internal consistency or construct reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) analysis, and discriminant validity. A measurement model has satisfactory internal consistency reliability when the composite reliability (CR) of each construct exceeds the threshold value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011; Hulland, 1999); the latent variable values higher than 0.5 for convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2011); and has satisfactory indicator reliability when the loading of each item is at least 0.4 or higher for exploratory research and is significant at least at the level of 0.05 (Hulland, 1999). Based on Table 3, the items in the measurement model exhibited

loading that exceeded 0.6178 ranging from a lower bound of 0.6178 to an upper bound of 0.7976. The CR values for all construct were more than 0.876 while the AVE values for all constructs were higher than 0.5. Thus, based on Table 3, all the items used for this study demonstrated satisfactory indicator reliability.

### Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity describes the extent to which each construct is distinct from one another (Chin, 1998). Two measures must be checked to test discriminant validity. The AVE of each construct should be higher than the highest squared correlation of the construct with any other LV in the model, and the loading of an indicator with its associated LV must be higher than its loading with other LVs (Chin, 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2011). Thus, to determine the first assessment of the measurement model's discriminant validity,

Table 3  
Measurement model

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE	CR
Motivation For Learning (MOV)	MOV 1	0.6864	0.564	0.9
	MOV 2	0.7348		
	MOV 3	0.7976		
	MOV 4	0.7502		
	MOV 5	0.7363		
	MOV 6	0.7624		
	MOV 7	0.785		
Self-Confidence (CON)	CON 1	0.7031	0.537	0.89
	CON 2	0.7746		
	CON 3	0.748		
	CON 4	0.7763		
	CON 5	0.7893		
	CON 6	0.6658		
	CON 7	0.6625		
Self-Management Skills (MS)	MS 1	0.7252	0.524	0.908
	MS 2	0.7695		
	MS 3	0.7076		
	MS 4	0.694		
	MS 5	0.7505		
	MS 6	0.7601		
	MS 7	0.745		
	MS 8	0.6178		
	MS 9	0.7318		
Interpersonal Skills (IS)	IS 1	0.6545	0.503	0.876
	IS 3	0.74		
	IS 4	0.6975		
	IS 5	0.7297		
	IS 6	0.6871		
	IS 7	0.7154		
	IS 8	0.7374		

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

the AVE value of each construct is generated using the SmartPLS algorithm function. Then, the square roots of the AVE are calculated manually. Based on the results, all the square roots of the AVE exceeded the off-diagonal elements in their corresponding

row and column. The bold values in Table 4 represent the square roots of the AVE and the non-bolded ones represent the inter-correlation value between the constructs. Based on Table 4, all the off-diagonal elements are lower than the square roots

of the AVE (bold on the diagonal). Hence, the results confirmed that the Fornell and Larcker’s criteria are met.

Table 4  
Discriminant validity

	CON	IS	MOV	MS
CON	<b>0.733</b>			
IS	0.403	<b>0.709</b>		
MOV	0.504	0.437	<b>0.7509</b>	
MS	0.504	0.484	0.428	<b>0.724</b>

Note. Average variances extracted (AVEs) are shown (in bold) on diagonal

**Structural Model**

The following subsection discusses the tests used to assess the validity of the structural model for this study. The validity is assessed using the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and path coefficients. In addition, this study also assesses the mediation relationships proposed in the research model. The coefficient of determination  $R^2$  indicates the amount of variance in the dependent variables that is explained by the independent variables. Based on Figure 2,

the coefficient of determination,  $R^2$  is 0.333 for the MOV endogenous latent variable. This means that the three latent variables (IS, MS and CON) moderately explain 33.3% of the variance in MOV while MS and IS together explain 28.7% of the variance of CON. Based on Figure 2, the inner model suggests that CON (0.338) is followed by IS (0.230) and MS (0.146). Thus, a larger  $R^2$  value increases the predictive ability of the structural model. In this study, the SmartPLS algorithm function is used to obtain the  $R^2$  values, while the SmartPLS bootstrapping function is used to generate the  $t$ -statistics values. For this study, the bootstrapping function generated 5000 samples from 383 cases. The results are presented in Table 5.

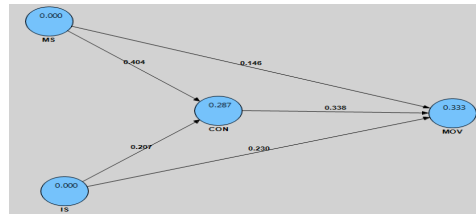


Figure 2. Path Coefficients of Self-Management and Interpersonal Skills, Self-Confidence and Motivation to Learn

Table 5  
Path coefficient

Hypotheses	Beta (Path Coefficient)	Standard Error	T Value	Decision
H1-MS positively affects CON	0.4040	0.0521	7.7632	Supported
H2 - MS positively affects MOV	0.1460	0.0627	2.3300	Supported
H3 - IS positively affects CON	0.2070	0.0520	3.9775	Supported
H4 - IS positively affects MOV	0.2300	0.0548	4.1976	Supported
H5 - CON positively affects MOV	0.3380	0.0528	6.4018	Supported
H6- CON mediate the relationship between MS and MOV	0.1400	0.03	5.11	Supported
H7 - CON mediate the relationship between IS and MOV	0.0700	0.02	3.38	Supported

Note. \*p< .05. \*\*p< .01.

From Table 5, MS→CON ( $\beta = .4040, p < .01$ ) and IS→CON ( $\beta = .2070, p < .01$ ) were positively related to CON. Hence H1 and H3 are supported. MS→MOV ( $\beta = .1460, p < .01$ ); IS→MOV ( $\beta = .2300, p < .01$ ); and CON→MOV ( $\beta = .3380, p < .01$ ) were positively related to MOV. Thus H2, H4 and H5 were supported. Based on Table 5, the bootstrapping analysis demonstrated that the indirect effect of  $\beta = 0.1400$  was significant with a *t* value of 5.11 (MS → CON → MOV) and indirect effect of  $\beta = 0.0700$  was significant with a *t* value of 3.38 (IS → CON → MOV). In addition, as indicated by Preacher and Hayes (2008), the indirect effect of 0.14, 95% boot confidence interval (CI): [0.080, 0.19] (MS→CON→MOV) and the indirect effect of 0.07, 95% boot confidence interval (CI): [0.030, 0.110] (IS→CON→MOV) do not straddle a 0 in-between indicating there is mediation. Thus, H6 and H7 are supported.

## DISCUSSION

The results from structural modelling indicates that undergraduates' self-management skills obtained from various WIL activities positively influenced their motivation to learn, which supports H1. This result is consistent with previous studies, which showed that students with self-management skills are more motivated to learn (Bembenuity, 2011) and it increases their willingness to learn to achieve continual success rather than be contented with temporary success (De Janasz & Godshalk, 2013). Self-management skills also positively influence undergraduates'

self-confidence, which supports H2. This result corresponds with Daft et al. (2010) who argues that self-management skills lead to balanced self-confidence. Through WIL programmes, students enhance their self-management skills such as developing high level of professionalism; time management; multi-tasking; self-awareness; managing work-life balance; and career management skills due to opportunities to directly interact with professionals and gain a better understanding of what constitutes professional behaviour and good work ethics and skills (Jackson, 2015). This will increase their motivation to learn in addition to attaining competencies and developing an understanding of expectations and responsibilities in their job as well as develop autonomy and good work practices, especially in multi-tasking and time management.

Next, interpersonal skills influence self-confidence and motivation to learn, which support H3 and H4. These results are in agreement with Syed et al. (2014) who described that interpersonal skills increased students' self-confidence and Lashley (2012) who argued that students with good interpersonal skills have high levels of motivation to learn. In terms of interpersonal skills, WIL helped undergraduates to develop their team-spirit and communication skills as well as enhanced problem-solving ability which helped build their self-confidence. Furthermore through WIL, undergraduates cemented their learning and enhanced understanding of actual organisational culture (Jackson, 2015) and enjoyed engaging with other professionals and co-workers

and being part of a community within an actual work environment (Varghese et al., 2012). The WIL also assists undergraduates in overcoming difficulties in workplace environment such as difficulties working with culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse co-workers. Hence, the development of set of skills as a result of WIL will increase undergraduates' confidence and motivation to learn which subsequently will increase their employability.

We can conclude from this study that undergraduates' self-confidence acts as a mediating factor for the motivation to learn. This finding is consistent with Bandura (1977), Harter (1978), and Griffin & Keogh (1982) who argued that self-confidence is a critical mediator of motivation and behaviour. WIL offers experience in performing career-specific skills and tasks that will serve to boost confidence and subsequently improve student motivation to learn by continuously pursuing learning and training opportunities during their employment and continue planning for their future career as well as willingness to change to meet situational demand. Self-confidence maybe regarded as an important psychological attribute to undergraduates in order to ensure that they engage effectively in their WIL and to be employable. This study provides valuable theoretical contributions by providing the sequencing of the output of WIL's programmes (e.g. undergraduate's personal attributes, psychological attributes, and learning outcomes) based on the perspectives of undergraduates who have already participated in the programmes.

The sequencing has been regarded as an important dimension in WIL's model because it demonstrated the way skills and knowledge should be structured so there is value and meaning to undergraduates' learning outcomes (Varghese et al., 2012). This study has shown that through WIL programmes, an undergraduate's personal attributes such as interpersonal and self-management skills are boosted which in turn bolster their self-confidence and increase their motivation to learn. Interestingly, this study also shows that the psychological attributes of undergraduates (e.g. self-confidence) play an integral role in nurturing employability skills in undergraduates and their motivation to apply these skills and to engage in lifelong learning for career development.

## CONCLUSION

Employability is an issue among graduates in Malaysia. The government, higher education providers, industry and academic researchers have long been concerned over this Institutions of higher education that introduce work- integrated learning (WIL) programmes have mushroomed across Malaysia and worldwide. Although the benefits of WIL have extensively been researched (e.g. career benefits, academic benefits, personal benefits, employer benefits and higher education provider benefits), there is limited research on how WIL programmes shape undergraduates' personal and psychological attributes and increase their motivation to learn. The results of this study indicate the

outcomes of WIL programme, such as undergraduates' motivation to learn, are enhanced by their self-confidence resulting from the development of interpersonal and self-management skills. The guidance provided by their experienced colleagues during WIL programmes is important in the development of undergraduates' self-confidence which directly boosts their desire to learn during and after participating in the programmes. The WIL programme is designed to enhance undergraduate's self-confidence. Inadequate preparation in these areas will result in a sense of inferiority among some undergraduates and impact their confidence in exhibiting employability skills and motivation to learn. This study has its limitations as it only focused on business degree local undergraduates from five public universities in Malaysia. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to all the undergraduates in Malaysia or internationally. We suggest that future research should focus on undergraduates from the sciences and engineering courses and on international students. It should also examine students' personal attribute (e.g. thinking skills, communication skills, computing skills, and entrepreneurship skills) and other psychological attributes (e.g. self-esteem and self-efficacy).

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