AN INSIGHT INTO RECRUITING QUALITY ACADEMICS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GENERATION Y

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ABSTRACT

Quality academics are crucial to enhance universities’ visibility in attracting more international students to pursue their tertiary education. Consequently, this may drive the nation aspiration of becoming higher education hub in the region on the right track. Indirectly, the nation economic will prosper from the fees and other means of income generated from the growing numbers of international students. Thus, gaining insight into what make an individual interested in pursuing academic career will lead to the identification of the right determinants of supplying quality academics. A quantitative study was carried out involving 463 third year undergraduate students (Generation Y) in selected universities. Passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility had been found to significantly predict the intention to pursue academic career based on social cognitive career theory. In addition, both career decision making to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features, and career decision making to handle task of gathering occupational information, had also been found to motivate further one’s confidence in pursuing academic career. However, when regressed together only passion was found to be significantly predicting intention to pursue academic career. Meanwhile, career decision-making self-efficacy of assessing personal and occupational features and career decision-making self-efficacy of gathering occupational information were well reported to partially mediate the relationship between passion and intention to pursue academic career. Results indicated that passion needs to be continuously nurtured once the academics were recruited.

Keywords: Quality academics, Generation Y, Passion, Supportive role model, Perceived workplace flexibility, Career decision-making self-efficacy

1. Introduction

“Vision 2020” has once become the benchmark year for Malaysia to reach its status as a fully developed nation. It was visualized that unless our higher education system was well recognized, Malaysia’s credibility to be known as a fully developed nation by the year 2020 be ascertained. This means that there is a strong connection between developed nation and highly educated human capital. In fact, a well-equipped human capital can be generated through good education to assist the development of a prosperous nation (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025). Through higher education as well, knowledgeable and skill workforces are created.

The 11th Malaysia Plan (2016–2020) aims at improving the quality of education for better student outcomes and institutional excellence. Coherently, ranking of local universities at the global level will improve. If all measures successfully accomplished, Malaysia should be able to reach its higher education height in a few months ahead (Mok & Yu, 2011; Morshidi Sirat, 2005, 2006). Nonetheless, amidst all the strategic planning and development, the aspiration is still out of reach. More efforts need to be done. The obstacle, however, whether Malaysia has commensurate number of

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academics to cope up with the rising number of international students. Past research argued that unless the higher learning institutions consist of quality academics only then Malaysia can become a global education hub (Yean & Yi, 2000). In order to pool these quality academics, an initiative needs to be done starting at the recruiting stage. One of the sources to ensure the continuous supply of academics is from the individuals of Generation Y. Specifically, the sooner they join the academic force, the better equip the public universities are in providing and sustaining quality education. Hence, discovering what make this generation eager to pursue the academic career may become the immediate steps in producing quality academics.

2. **Background**

2.1 Economic Impact of International Students

The aspiration to become higher education hub has been collectively upheld and supported by all public universities. The move to set Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) apart from Ministry of Education showed the seriousness of the government to be more focus in achieving this goal faster (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007; Singh, Kaur, Schapper & Jack, 2013; Tham & Kam, 2008). Nevertheless, due to cost effectiveness and fully utilization of human resources, the merging of both ministries into the original one was brought back. Other strategies have also been launched and implemented including the introduction of Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2015, the implementation of National Higher Education Strategic Plan, proactive promotion on the internationalisation of higher education through global network (Tham & Kam, 2008), and the concentrated efforts to promote higher education as in the 11th Malaysia Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEI/Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>24,212</td>
<td>25,855</td>
<td>26,232</td>
<td>29,662</td>
<td>32,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>62,705</td>
<td>45,246</td>
<td>57,306</td>
<td>53,971</td>
<td>74,996</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>86,919</td>
<td>71,101</td>
<td>83,538</td>
<td>83,633</td>
<td>107,838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: Statistics from Ministry of Higher Education. Private HEIs include colleges.

Along the ways, some achievements were made which saw the better positioning of Malaysia in the ladder of higher education preferred destination in the world as reported in the World Education Service Report (Zulkifli Abd Rahman., 2014, April 13). The recognition was partly due to the enrolment of international students in higher education institutions in Malaysia which recorded a stunning increased from 86,919 students in 2010 to 107,838 in 2014 as shown in Table 1. The graphic illustration in Figure 1 features the constant number of international students in public universities,
while an upward trend was observed on the entrance of international students in private higher education institutions taking professional certificates, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate degree.

Meanwhile, Table 2 and Figure 2 exhibit the enrolment of international students pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies from year 2014 to 2017. Malaysia had received quite a big number of postgraduate students in public universities compared to private higher education institutions. On the contrary, the number of international students taking undergraduate study is triple than that in public universities. Overall, this suggests the growing interest of international students. The presence of international students means an income to the country whereby the income is not only come from the fees they paid but also the spending they made individually or with family throughout their study years. Siegfried, Sanderson and McHenry (2007) argued that the totalling of the various expenditures of the university community notably by the students, as well as faculty, staff and visitors created by the university’s presence and multipliers are applied thereafter to account for the interdependency of economic activities in the local economy (Hassan et al., 2018).

Table 2: Enrolment of International Students in Higher Education Institutions (2014-2017)

| Year | Public | | | Private | | |
|------|--------|----|---|--------|---|
|      | Undergrads | Postgrads | Total | Undergrads | Postgrads | Total |
| 2014 | 9,885   | 22,957   | 32,842 | 25,392   | 5,412   | 30,804 |
| 2015 | 11,081  | 22,315   | 33,396 | 36,109   | 8,029   | 44,138 |
| 2016 | 9,483   | 21,115   | 30,598 | 40,557   | 9,491   | 50,048 |
| 2017 | 11,925  | 21,170   | 33,095 | 45,774   | 10,693  | 56,467 |

Note: Statistics from Ministry of Higher Education/Ministry of Education. These data refer to the number of enrolments of international students taking undergraduate and postgraduate studies only from 2014 to 2017.

Figure 2: Enrolment of Undergraduate and Postgraduate International Students (2014-2017)

Hassan et al. (2018) revealed that the international students’ subsistence spending had substantially contributed to the economy of the community particularly where the university is situated. Some industries directly benefited; namely, foods and beverages, clothing, telecommunication, and entertainment (Hassan et al., 2018). The local businesses not only survived for not strategically located in the populous area but had also experienced a fast growth in the continuous presence of international students. According to Hassan et al. (2018), the influx of the economy not only derived from the estimated subsistence spending, but also spending locations and spending frequency levels in a month. In fact, there is a direct relationship between the existence of university and local economy (Armstrong, Darrall & Grove-White, 1997). The greater the number of the students means the bigger the pool of the customers. Hence, the continuous spending made by the international students leads to the substantial injection of income to the economy in general.
2.2 A Preferred Destination of Pursuing Higher Education Institutions

For most developed countries, high income was also earned from international trade in educational services (Cheung, Yuen, Yuen, & Cheng, 2011, Falahat et al., 2015). This opportunity does not only benefit a single higher education institution where the international students are pursuing their studies but also bring impact to the nation economy at large. This likelihood explains why many popular destinations for higher education studies were among the developed countries. Besides Malaysia, the other four countries aggressively promoting their competitiveness as higher education providers in Asia are South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Clark, 2015). Munusamy and Hashim (2019) revealed that the recruitment of international students provides a gateway for another source of income generation to the economy. Much attention has been drawn to how revenue may also come from the expenses that the students’ families contributing especially among postgraduate international students (Munusamy & Hashim, 2019). According to Munusamy and Hashim (2019), the presence of 173,000 international students in Malaysia in 2018 had contributed to more than RM7 billion which equated the budget of 20 public universities.

Due to the intense competition of other higher education aspirants in Asia, Malaysia has revised and restructured its strategy of becoming regional higher education hub (Economic Planning Unit, 2010) to becoming an international higher education hub as stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint-Higher Education 2015-2025 (MEBHE 2015-2025) (MOE, 2015, p. 8-4) (Munusamy & Hashim, 2019). This recent development is necessary to cope up with the pressure to having enrolment of 200,000 international students (Chong & Mokhtar, 2013; Suryandari, Jaafar & Hamzah, 2014) as targeted in Vision 2020. Henceforth, Malaysia has to be aggressively promoting its higher education institutions knowing the competitors are among the developed countries. In doing so, the quality of the institutions (Hassan & Sheriff, 2006) and international recognition (Maringe & Carter, 2007) must be transpired through the quality of the academics which had been identified as among the main factors that attracting international students to study abroad (Migin et al., 2015).

2.3 The Supply of Quality Academics

Notwithstanding, it has been a global dilemma that staff numbers have not kept up with the heavy increase in the student population (Court, 1999). Study among UK academics found this scenario of imbalance number of the student-staff ratio had risen steadily. Lindholm (2004) argued that there is a big concern on the departure of boomers that is not tally with the entrance of Generation Y in academic career. In short, there was a widespread retirement cases in this decade which had actually been predicted a decade ago (Lindholm, 2004). This poses another threat to the effort of providing sufficient number of academics. In Malaysia, similar scenario seems to follow as shown in the MOE/MOHE’s statistics in the past years. In addition to that, the enrolments of students and staff employed (Ministry of Higher Education, 2008-2017; Ministry of Education, 2018) displays the growing enrolment of international students (Table 1 and Table 2) which will add to the high expectation of existing 40 per cent of local students pursuing their higher education.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local:</td>
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<td>2670</td>
<td>2587</td>
<td>2743</td>
<td>2761</td>
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<td>2967</td>
<td>3171</td>
<td>3174</td>
<td>3152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int’l:</td>
<td>1261</td>
<td>1403</td>
<td>1681</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>2151</td>
<td>2712</td>
<td>2430</td>
<td>2199</td>
<td>1719</td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>1452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>2634</td>
<td>2810</td>
<td>3025</td>
<td>2919</td>
<td>2976</td>
<td>3251</td>
<td>3191</td>
<td>3187</td>
<td>3343</td>
<td>3328</td>
<td>3298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>4193</td>
<td>4374</td>
<td>4627</td>
<td>5082</td>
<td>5217</td>
<td>5603</td>
<td>5631</td>
<td>5406</td>
<td>5320</td>
<td>5385</td>
<td>5527</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet, the number of academics were still at a steady rate (Figure 3). To add more worries, the constant increase of expatriate staff from 2008 to 2018 (Table 3) suggests that there is a high demand of expatriate to teach certain subject areas that locals could not cover. Even though the proposed ratio of 1:17 might look well (Ahmad Nurulazam Md Zain, et al., 2008) but it is not in practice across and within the public universities (IPPTN, 2006). In short, there is a dire need to recruit not only larger number of new faculty in the replacement of senior generation of academicians but also the quality academics who can enhance the attractiveness of Malaysian public universities.

![Figure 3: The Ratio of Academics to Students in Higher Education Institutions (2008-2018)](image)

Understanding better how personal and contextual factors operate together to shape reasons for pursuing the career in academics is useful in order to attract newcomers to academic profession. In other words, there is a need to investigate factors that will incite individuals’ interest to academic career to achieve the aspiration of becoming global higher education hub. Once these factors could be identified, effort to sharpen them may directly inspire one to become quality academics. Literature reviews suggest that passion, supportive role model, perceived workplace flexibility, and career decision-making self-efficacy could predict the intention to pursue an academic career. Thus, the following research questions were used to guide this study;

1. **Do passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility have a significant relationship towards the intention to pursue academic career?**

2. **Does the intervention of career decision-making self-efficacy contribute a significant impact on the relationship between passion, supportive role model and perceived workplace flexibility, and the intention to pursue academic career?**

### 3. Literature Review

Generation Y is going to be the dominant generation in the current workforce. According to Strauss and Howe (1991, 2000), Generation Y, who were born starting around 1982 and continuing through the year 2001, is a hero or civic generation. Strauss and Howe (1991, 2000) argue Generation Y as unraveling and is asserting itself among culture wars, postmodernism, and technology. A local study (Lim & Wong, 2009) had identified Generation Y as those individuals born between 1980 and 2000 only. This cohort of generation has different characteristics that determine their different personality, attitudes, motivations, and ways of behaving at work as a result of their own life experiences and expectations (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Tay, 2011). Despite of many thoughts being put forth by scholars about the differences involving generational differences, it is worth to ponder that the different experiences that these generations experienced that has shaped their unique views, traits and behaviors (Willets, D., 2011). Noteworthy, while studying the behavior of Generation Y has increased in publication, topics on the other senior generations still actively pursued, especially when...
comparative research of generational differences becomes the focus. The current trend of research, however, witnesses Generation Y to continuously dominate most researches in all sectors. In fact, this Generation Y has become the largest workforce to be. In this research Generation Y involves university students of Generation Y who currently pursuing their undergraduate studies at Malaysian public universities.

3.1 Generation Y as the Future Supply of Academicians

The study specifically focuses on Generation Y because this generation needs to be attracted and retained in the academic workforce if the supply of academician is to be increased. In view of this notion, the final year undergraduate students studying in Malaysian public universities were chosen as the respondents of the study since they are at the stage of making career decision (Erikson, 1968; Super, 1987). The opportunity to study in any of the public universities is an added advantage that they are familiar with the surrounding environment, development and challenges found at local public universities that these Generation Y’s undergraduate students may be comfortable with once they enter academia as academics in near future. Moreover, Generation Y will make up the largest numbers of workforce for a long period of time compare to the Generation X and Baby Boomers Generation (Meier, Stephen, & Crocker, 2010). Based on their unique characteristics, they have the advantage of matching many careers available in job market, including academic career. Therefore, the researcher sees the significant of this group as the future supply of academicians. A close attention should be given on their characteristics and personality traits that will influence their degree of certainty in choosing academic career.

3.2 The Characteristics of Generation Y

Members of Generation Y, who are born in the year 1980 to 2000 (Lim & Wong, 2009), possess different characteristics than the previous generations (Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2014; Downe et al., 2008; Dries, et al., 2008; Gursoy, et al., 2008; Zemke, et al., 2000). Members of Generation Y have different attitudes, different motivations, and different ways of behaving at work (Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2014). Their life experiences and surrounding environment influence their personality traits (Tay, 2011). Some prevailing characteristics of Generation Y are the tendency of putting loyalty more towards lifestyle rather than the job (Rorholm, 2007; Solomon, 2008), expecting fast career advancement or promotions, opens to technology adeptness, addicts to change, requires on-going training, expects consistent feedback, needs to be rewarded immediately for accomplished jobs, acts collectively, and favors teamwork (Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2014; Downe et al., 2008; Dries, et al., 2008; Gursoy, et al., 2008; Zemke, et al., 2000).

3.3 Intention to Pursue Academic Career

Academic career encompasses teaching, doing research, engaging in community services, and performing administrative work (Levin, 1991; Lindholm, 2004; Norhasni Zainal Abidin & Mohd Rafaa Ayudin, 2008; Taylor, 1999). In other words, academic career combines research and teaching of the academician area of specialty, contributes to the development of the community, and exposed to administrative work either directly or indirectly (Goldacre et al., 2005; Levin, 1991; Lindholm, 2004; Norhasni Zainal Abidin & Mohd Rafaa Ayudin, 2008; Taylor, 1999). It is due to these natures that academic career is known as a helping profession which requires personal and social experiences, as well as inspiration to serve others to sail successfully in this intriguing career (Fischman et al., 2001).

Scholars such as Cohen and Parsotam (2010) and Johnson et al. (2008), envisage that one’s intention to pursue a career is determined by the subjective probability of individuals choosing to pursue a career. Based on the Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary, intention can be defined as an individual’s desire to try or to achieve something over a time frame. In the current research, studying individuals’ intention to pursue academic career, especially among those individuals below 24 years old is considered relevant since these individuals have yet to reach their career maturity stage (Super, 1957). This means that these individuals are ready to decide on which career to pursue within the age of 24 and above.
The study used the sample of final year undergraduate students, who get better exposure to academic career since they have experiencing the academia life. It is normal for them to think of the career they intend to pursue toward the end of their study year (Super, 1957). Astin (1984) reported that students aspire to pursue academic career since the career can provide adequate income for survival needs. In general, there is a rewarding pay and benefits attached to academic career especially in public university (Ab Rahim Bakar et al., 2014). Nonetheless, academic career also brings pleasure in the forms of contributions made through research, writing and teaching (Astin, 1984). Thus, Astin’s (1984) finding revokes the idea that individuals seek academic career to accumulate financial wealth. Rather, individuals pursue academic career because of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

3.4 Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Gore & Leuwerke, 2000) was developed as a way to understand and explain individuals’ vocational interests, choices, and performance. Lent and colleagues (2002) found that SCCT as shown in Figure 4 was more suitable to be used in explaining career choices related to academia. SCCT can moderate and directly affect interests into goals, and goals to actions (Lent et al., 1994, 2000). This is shown through how SCCT is working. SCCT promotes the notion that career interests are regulated by self-efficacy and an outcome expectation that may form lasting interests in activities when they experience personal competency and positive outcomes. However, having less confidence with one’s competency will only cause people to avoid activities. Especially, when facing barriers or receiving inadequate supports that may hamper individuals’ intention to put career interest into actions. Thus, SCCT caters the idea that perceived contextual supports and lack of barriers will facilitate the realization of interest into goals, and goals into actions. It is believed that supports received from role model could ease the barriers that may block individuals’ intention. In addition, government’s continuous effort in making academia as a conducive working environment plays a major role in attracting more individuals to academic career. In short, individual passion, better supports and lesser barriers represent personal and contextual factors that could lead to the intention to pursue a career as described by SCCT.

![Figure 4: The Model of SCCT on Career Choice Behavior (Lent et al., 1994)](image)

3.5 Personal Factor of Passion

A strong inclination or desire towards an activity that one likes, finds important, and in which one invests time and energy defines the meaning of passion (Vallerand et al., 2003, p. 757). The current study confines the meaning of passion to energy, desire, enthusiasm, emotion, and motivation that one puts on while pursuing academic career choice (Sumerlin & Littrell, 2011). In view of this, passion is directly associated to what make one wants to become academician which includes one’s love for ideas, love for educating others, and love for students (Fried, 2001). In academic profession, interests towards teaching, doing research, and performing service will enable anyone to succeed in the career. Various authors state that teachers’ passion in teaching and knowledge were developed as a result of emotional attachment (Day, 2004; Day, et al., 2007; Elliot & Crosswell, 2002). Emotional attachment
acts as intrinsic motivation that drives personal desire and motivation. Such engagement of desire and motivation generates passion which forms a crucial link between the work and individuals’ personal level of commitment (Day, 2004; Elliot & Crosswell, 2002). A study by Norshima Zainal Shah (2008) revealed that academicians will instill good knowledge to their students if the academicians feel sensitive to the well-being of the students. As a consequence, the passionate academicians could extend the important education to the students (Norshima Zainal Shah, 2008). Hence, hypothesis was developed as follow;

H1: Passion is positively related to the intention to pursue an academic career.

3.6 Supportive Role Model

People whose lives and activities influence another person in some way directly define the meaning of supportive role model (Bascoc & Howe, 1979; Nauta and Kokaly, 2001; Quimby & DeSantis, 2006). Role models exert influence directly or indirectly (Nauta and Kokaly, 2001; Fried & McCleave, 2009). However, the level of influence depends on the type of relationship (Fouzia, Amla & Ramlee, 2010). According to Fouzia and colleagues (2010), role model may influence individual’s career decision through healthy relationship in which there is a direct relationship between the role model and the modeller. According to Lent and colleagues (1994), SCCT describes a direct effect of role model on career choice. As espoused in SCCT, role model provides vicarious learning experiences that increase the tendency of individuals to choose a specific career (lent et al., 1994). This is supported by the fact that learning experiences are gained as a result of a particular teacher’s influence (Goldacre et al., 2005). Anderson and Gilbride (2005) found that those who are still undecided about their future career choice could be influenced by receiving career information. This could take place if direct support is provided by role model (Nauta & Kokaly, 2001) such as providing necessary information to enthusiast students. In fact, the successful career achieved by role model itself will create a strong belief to others that they too could succeed in the same field as their role models (Perrone et al., 2002). Furthermore, vicarious learning may establish the required general support (Nauta & Kokaly, 2001) which increases individuals’ self-efficacy and build individuals’ confidence with the career (Fieldt et al., 2010). Therefore, it was hypothesized in this study that;

H2: Supportive role model is positively related to the intention to pursue an academic career.

3.7 Perceived Workplace Flexibility

Perceived workplace flexibility refers to the degree in which individuals envisage the work arrangement in the career so that individuals are able to make choices to arrange the core aspects of their professional lives, particularly regarding where, when, and how long work is performed (Hill et al., 2008). Lu et al. (2008) defined the meaning of workplace flexibility as the consideration given by the direct supervisor to entertain personal or family matters for an hour or two. The current researcher conceptualized the definition of perceived workplace flexibility mainly based on these two definitions. Since respondents are final year undergraduates, the current research defined perceived workplace flexibility as one’s ability to perceive the choice that one has in arranging the core aspects of one’s professional lives with regards to where, when, and how long work is performed (Hill et al., 2008) and time permitted to attend personal and family matters that can be considered by the employer (Lu et al., 2008). The current study also identified perceived workplace flexibility as another relevant factor that may predict individual’s intention to pursue a career, especially academic career choices (Carbonneau et al., 2008). At far, there is no major issue concerning place of doing work in public universities in Malaysia. Meanwhile, the allowance for personal leaves, which refers to a permission given to individuals for an hour or two to tackle personal or family matters, indicate strongly the perceived workplace flexibility found in academia. Nowadays, flexible place to do the job becomes practical in parallel with the technological advance. Workers may sometimes telecommute that allow them to work remotely. In fact, this arrangement proves that workers can still successfully accomplish their job (Hartman, 2006). Thus, while doing their work, they can also
accommodate their personal or family needs. Taking time off for an hour or two to deal with personal or family matters during working hours has been highly valued by employees (Vallerand et al., 2003). In brief, academic career needs to meet such expectation in order to attract people to pursue academic career. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

**H3: Perceived workplace flexibility is positively related to the intention to pursue academic career.**

### 3.8 Intervening Effect of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy

Career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) investigates individuals’ confidence in making career decisions (Betz, Klein, Taylor, 1996; Taylor & Betz, 1983). CDMSE composes of five dimensions; namely, accurate self-appraisal, problem solving, planning, goal selection, and occupational information. These five dimensions represent the five competencies in the sub-scales of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale. High efficacy on these tasks means high career decision-making self-efficacy. Individuals with higher career decision-making self-efficacy, may have higher career exploration behaviour and vocational identity. Study showed that students who are more confident in their ability to complete the tasks related to career decisions were more certain because they have a clear vision of their goal, strengths, and interests (Gushe, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006). Taylor and Betz (1983) revealed that career indecision among university students is due to their inability to make a choice. On the other hand, students who were less confidence in career decision-making tasks were also less confidence in making career choices.

CDMSE had served as a significant mediator to motivate people to achieve special goals, such as pursuing a career in particular areas (Feltz & Payment, 2005). A study on undergraduate students revealed that problem solving subscale was the most difficult task to do, while self-appraisal and occupational information subscales as the least difficult (Isik, 2010). The study also found that the older group (21 and over) scored significantly higher on goal selection, planning, self-appraisal, and occupational information subscales than younger group (20 years of age and below). In addition, CDMSE displays the ability to make career-related decisions in which low score on CDMSE indicates the inability in career-related decisions. Consequently, this may have an impact on students’ future career plan. Furthermore, Patton and Creed (2007) found a significant correlation between CDMSE and students’ career aspirations and expectations in which students who earned a high score in CDMSE scale were those students who were high in career aspirations and expectations. Thus, the five tasks of career decision making need to be at a significant score to ascertain that one is ready to make a career choice (Bakar, Zakaria, Mohamed, & Hanafi, 2011).

After doing the factor analysis, only three dimensions of CDMSE; namely, confidence of assessing personal and occupational features, confidence of gathering occupational information and confidence of making a realistic planning were proposed to be used as mediator. The following hypotheses were developed to test the mediation impact of CDMSE;

**H4: Career decision-making self-efficacy tasks (confidence of assessing personal and occupational features, gathering occupational information, and making a realistic planning) significantly mediate the relationship between passion, role model and perceived workplace flexibility, and intention to pursue academic career.**

In the end, the hypotheses were developed to the following theoretical framework (Figure 5);
4. Research Methods

This quantitative study used multistage stratified proportionate sampling method. At the first stage, Malaysian public universities are divided into strata based on the types of universities which lead to the chosen of Comprehensive Universities. Four universities namely, UiTM (Shah Alam Campus), IIUM (Gombak Campus), UNIMAS, and UMS, were involved. The sample involved only final year undergraduates in social sciences discipline only. Stratified random sampling was used to come up with the appropriate number of sampling. The total number of the samples in the study was 4,004 which were narrow down into 640, 1,656, 518, and 1,190 students in UNIMAS, UiTM, UMS, and IIUM respectively. The researcher had self-administered the distribution of the questionnaires.

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested that for 95 per cent confidence interval and five per cent of margin of error, the minimum sample size that represented 518 students of Year Three in UMS, and 640 students of UNIMAS should be 46 and 57 respectively. In the end, the sample size for all participating universities will be above the minimum level (Pearson & Mundform, 2010). Based on these additional requirement, the kth element for sampling method was met accordingly. The researcher managed to get equivalent numbers of respondents as being sampled for UiTM and IIUM. However, for UMS and UNIMAS, the participating students exceeded the needed numbers. Instead of maintaining the proposed sampling of only 46 students in UMS and 57 students in UNIMAS, decision was made to count up the sample. Thus, there were 57 and 49 additional students from UMS and UNIMAS respectively to be usable samples. Two reasons were taken by the researcher for taking this action; First, the researcher would like to see an equivalent number of students from all four universities based on the pro rata. Second, the current study investigates the intention of individuals from this sample to pursue academic career. Getting the feedback from available students could add more meaningful findings. The detailed distribution of questionnaires to respondents is shown in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UITM</th>
<th>IIUM</th>
<th>UMS</th>
<th>UNIMAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>No. of undergraduates (Final Year)</td>
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<td>1190</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>4004</td>
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<td>Proportionate sample (Krejcie &amp; Morgan, 1970)</td>
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<td>106</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of participating respondents</td>
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<td>106</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>463</td>
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<tr>
<td>Per cent (%) of participating respondents</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sampling of Respondents

5. Results

5.1 Correlation Analyses

As shown in Table 5, the results indicated that passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility were positively correlated with intention to pursue intention. Passion (r = 0.70, p < 0.01) was found to be strongly and positively associated with intention to pursue academic career. Meanwhile, supportive role model (r = 0.47, p < 0.01) and perceived workplace flexibility (r = 0.41, p < 0.01) were found to be moderately positively associated with intention to pursue academic career. In view of the relationship between passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility and CDMSE’s confidence to handle tasks, the results varied. Passion (r = 0.38, p < 0.01), supportive role model (r = 0.35, p < 0.01), and perceived workplace flexibility (r = 0.33, p < 0.01) were shown as having a moderate positive relationship with CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features, while Inspirational role model (r = 0.01, p > 0.05) was insignificant. Similar results occurred in the correlations between the passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility and CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information. Results depicted that passion (r = 0.38), supportive role model (r = 0.35), and workplace flexibility (r = 0.35), were having a moderate positive significant correlation with
CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information. In summary, the results of the correlation coefficient analysis revealed that the correlations between the independent variables, mediating variables, and dependent variables were significant and positive. The significant correlation coefficient values between all variables appeared to be in the range of 0.14 to 0.71 (p < 0.01).

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis

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<th>1</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intention to Pursue Academic Career</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>0.70**</td>
<td>0.87</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Supportive Role Model</td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.83</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Perceived Workplace Flexibility</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>0.61**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CDMSE’s Confidence to Handle Task of Assessing Personal &amp; Occupational Features</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CDMSE’s Confidence to Handle Task of Gathering Occupational Information</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.35**</td>
<td>0.71**</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>CDMSE’s Confidence to Handle Task of Making Realistic Planning</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>0.49**</td>
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Means |
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<td>3.84</td>
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<td>3.62</td>
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<td>2.98</td>
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Std. Dev. |
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<tr>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); p < 0.01. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); p < 0.05.

5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between the motivating factors comprising passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility (independent variables), and intention to pursue an academic career (dependent variable). In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility (independent variables) and each task of career decision-making self-efficacy i.e. CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features (APOF), CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information (GOI), and CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making a realistic planning (RP) (mediating variable). Finally, multiple regression analysis was carried out to analyze the relationship between CDMSE’s confidence to handle tasks i.e. CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features (APOF), CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information (GOI), and CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making a realistic planning (RP) (mediating variables) and intention to pursue intention (dependent variable). In brief, multiple regression analysis provided a means of assessing the relative importance of the combined factors in the regression variate (Hair et al., 1998).

Results show that individually passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility significantly predicted intention to pursue academic career. F(4, 458) = 115, p ≤ 0.01, R² = 0.50. The R² of 0.50 meant that approximately 50 per cent of the variability of intention to pursue academic career was accounted for by passion, supportive role model, and perceived workplace flexibility. However, when tested together, supportive role model (β = 0.07, p = 0.11) and perceived workplace flexibility (β = - 0.02, p = 0.62) were found to have no significant relationship with intention to pursue academic career both in the direct regression between independent variables and the dependent variable as well as the hierarchical regression. In other words, when combined (multiple regressed) only passion produce significant results with intention to pursue academic career,
and partially mediated by CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features, and CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information. CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making a realistic planning (RP) as a mediator on the relationship between passion, supportive role model, inspirational role model, and perceived workplace flexibility, and dimensions of intention to pursue intention was not pursued because there was no significant relationship between CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making a realistic planning and each dimension of intention to pursue intention.

Results of the hierarchical regression equation testing the mediating effect of CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features on the relationship between passion and intention to pursue academic career showed that passion positively influence intention to pursue academic career ($\beta = 0.70, p = 0.00$). Whereas CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features had a positive impact on intention to pursue academic career ($\beta = 0.11, p = 0.00$). Results indicated that after the inclusion of the mediator (CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features) in the model of step 2, the beta coefficients of passion had experienced a decrease ($\beta = 0.65, p = 0.01$). The results supported the general hypothesis in which CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features was said to have a partial mediation effect on the relationships between passion and intention to pursue academic career only.

Results of the hierarchical regression equation testing the mediating effect of CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information on the relationship between passion and intention to pursue academic career showed that passion positively influence intention to pursue academic career ($\beta = 0.70, p = 0.00$). Whereas CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information did have a positive impact on intention to pursue academic career ($\beta = 0.09, p = 0.02$). Results provided indicated that after the inclusion of the mediator (CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information) in the model of step 2, the beta coefficients of passion had experienced a decrease ($\beta = 0.66, p = 0.00$). The results supported the general hypothesis in which CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information was said to have a partial mediation effect on the relationships between passion and intention to pursue academic career only.

6. Discussions

6.1 The Impact of Passion in Pursuing Academic Career

In academic career, the knowledge is disseminated to students mainly in two ways; teaching and research (Alfonso & Leon, 2016). Passion leads individuals to dedicate themselves fully to an activity, be persistence and enables individuals to remain dedicated to a specific activity for as long as the activity required, engendering the high levels of commitment and everyday practices necessary to achieve excellence (Vallerand et al., 2007; Vallerand, 2008; Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011). Passion has also been linked to academic productivity (Martínez, Floyd, & Erichsen, 2011; Mayrath, 2007), students’ well-being and positive affect (Fredricks, Alfeld, & Eccles, 2010). Only then one is capable of producing quality human capital for the future. Moreover, Malaysia is aspired to become a reputable higher education hub in the region. Therefore, Malaysia needs quality academicians to produce quality graduates. Consequently, Malaysian higher learning institutions could be recognized around the globe.

In addition to passion in teaching, being academicians requires one to embark on continuous research. Academic career aspirants must adapt to research and publication philosophy in which they need to be passionately interested and continuously contribute to the knowledge of the field once they are in the career. Academic career aspirants might as well be aware of the social responsibilities of academicians which are not only within the university compound. It extends beyond the boundary of university as what being identified as community-service engagement. In other words, the study implicates that in academic career, one should have the interest in teaching, do research and community engagement. This is in support of the efforts to put Malaysian universities at par with the recognized universities in the region (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025). In order to create a
higher education system that ranks among the world’s leading education systems and that enables Malaysia to compete in the global economy, the Ministry and higher learning institutions will focus on achieving global prominence by strengthening Malaysia’s higher education value proposition, capacity, and capabilities. Malaysia needs to raise the nation’s higher education brand even further, from an attractive destination known for good value for money and quality of life, to one that is also recognised, referred to, and respected internationally for its academic and research expertise. This aspiration requires a full support from the academics. Hence, the current study has seen the importance of passion to be nurtured among the undergraduates who are the potential academic career aspirants.

6.2 The Influence of Supportive Role Models

There is a high internal consistency reliability recorded over the items in supportive role models (0.83) in which the items measuring the effect of supportive role models are considered good enough. In addition, the mean values for this variable also had a strong score of 3.62 which implied individuals’ perception on the influence of someone, especially among academicians, in assisting individuals’ intention to pursue academic career. In fact, among the predicting factors, supportive role models scored the highest mean value. In view of this finding, it could be concluded that the necessity of having supportive role models is warranted when dealing with intention to pursue academic career.

The results were in line with Fouziah et al.’ (2010), Fried and MacCleave’s (2009), and Nauta and Kokaly’s (2001) findings that a healthy relationship could transpire from the direct assistance of influential others (Gemme, 2005). Consequently, individuals will be ready to decide on a career. Moreover, Fauziah Nordin (2009) revealed that in collectivist society, such as Malaysia, this type of role models (supportive role models) who provides direct assistance is highly expected. Nauta and Kokaly (2001) asserted that some career choices need detailed information for one to make a decision to pursue. Academic career is one of the career choices. It is necessary for aspirations to get further information about academic career in order to successfully pursue the career. For example, individuals might want to befriend with some academicians so that they could get better information on which field or subject they should go for. In the course of time, individuals build a close relationship with these supportive role models who will later furnish them with the right information as well as the right advice (Perrone et al., 2002).

In view of this, supportive role model would not only provide support but also act as mentor who is around when needed (MacCallum & Beltman, 2002). According to MacCallum and Beltman (2002), mentoring has been known as the popular act of giving support and guidance. Supportive role models also offer strategies on how to be successful in the career chosen. For instance, in developing individuals’ research skill which is relevant to successful academic career (Adedokun et al., 2011). In fact, Lent et al.’ (1994) stated that attentive learning from the relationship built with role models will enhance students’ efficacy. Gibson (2004) revealed that the relationship built with role model could influence self-concept and provide learning, motivation, and inspiration. In addition, the role model not only provides general information on achieving the goal (becoming academician) but also show the path to achieve that goal. In short, the exposure to role model, in this case, the supportive role model, would increase the attainment of career aspiration as well (Nauta et al., 1998; Nauta & Kokaly, 2001; Shapiro et al., 2013). Therefore, based on the argument about supportive role models, the items in supportive role models may become the appropriate measures in predicting the career intention towards academic career choices.

6.3 Perceived Workplace Flexibility

Perceived workplace flexibility refers to the degree in which individuals envisage the work arrangement in the career so that individuals are able to make choices to arrange the core aspects of their professional lives, particularly regarding where, when, and how long work is performed (Hill et al., 2008). Lu et al. (2008) defined the meaning of workplace flexibility as the consideration given by direct supervisor to entertain personal or family matters for an hour or two. The current researcher conceptualized the definition of perceived workplace flexibility mainly based on these two definitions. Since respondents are final year undergraduates, the current research defined perceived
workplace flexibility as one’s ability to perceive the choice that one has in arranging the core aspects of one’s professional lives with regards to where, when, and how long work is performed (Hill et al., 2008) and time permitted to attend personal and family matters that can be considered by the employer (Lu et al., 2008).

Factor analysis found that the five-item measure of perceived workplace flexibility describes academic career as having flexible place, flexible time, flexible schedule, time allowance to take care of personal matters, and time allowance to take care of family matters. The measure of internal consistency reliability showed an acceptable Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78, which is considered good enough to measure perceived workplace flexibility (Welman & Kruger, 2001). In addition, this variable had a mean value score of 3.41. As one of the predicting factors that predict intention to pursue academic career, perceived workplace flexibility is second to supportive role models, but had higher mean value if compared to passion. This indicated that perceived workplace flexibility is also a significant factor to attract people to pursue academic career.

6.4 The Mediating Effects of CDMSE’s Confidence to Handle Task of Assessing Personal and Occupational Features

CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features partially mediated the relationship between passion and intention to pursue intention. This means that passion has both direct and indirect effect on intention to pursue intention when mediated by CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features. In other words, the result implies that one may have passion in academic career, but one may still not follow through their intention to pursue the career unless one found the match between the characteristics or the aspects of the career, and one’s expectation. As revealed by Gushe et al. (2006), individuals’ confidence in performing the tasks is associated with the compatibility of the career to what individuals expect the career to be. Indirectly, the results revealed that one’s eagerness to pursue a career would become much higher if one knows the positive impact or the benefits that the career could bring to the society. In view of this, it could be interpreted that supportive role models might directly or indirectly affect one’s intention to pursue academic career as a result of the extrinsic importance attached to academic career. It has become evident that for role models who share information about the interesting academic career with others such as through close research supervision or mentor-mentee program, these role models would least likely talk about the significant of other careers than academic career. As a consequence, this type of role models (role models with direct at influence) would incite individuals’ interest in academic career. In addition, one could get the right information of the extrinsic importance attached to academic career related to academic career from role models who often interacts with students. Nevertheless, the partial mediation effect indicated that supportive role models would only provide the necessary information of extrinsic benefits if one sees common characteristics of the career and oneself.

6.5 The Mediating Effects of CDMSE’s Confidence to Handle Task of Gathering Occupational Information

Current study revealed the impact of passion on intention to pursue intention as mediated by CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information. In addition, the study also exposed the impact of passion and supportive role models on extrinsic importance attached to academic career as mediated by CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information. This means that passion has both direct and indirect effect on intention to pursue intention when mediated by CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of gathering occupational information. In other words, the result implies that one is unsure to fulfil the intention to pursue academic career just because of the passion in academic career. However, if one found that there is enough information about the academic career one will pursue the intention seriously. When one is confident with the related information gathered about the academic career, one has the tendency to be more committed in pursuing the career (Anderson & Gilbride, 2005). For instance, even though academicians have been called to contribute more in research outputs, academic career is still closely related to having a flexible work schedule and arrangement. Apart from the core tasks of teaching and doing research, some challenges may appear in the form of administrative dissatisfaction (Haryani
Haron et al., 2010). Thus, ability to perceive these issues and challenges could be known through the information gathered which may positively affect one’s intention to pursue academic career. In short, information gathered about the career’s challenges and issues would increase or decrease one’s preference of the career. Thus, the more knowledge that one has on the career, the greater the intention to pursue intention would be in which having passion alone would not determine the intention to pursue the career. However, one may still not follow through one’s intention to pursue academic career unless one is sure enough that one is capable of perceiving all the issues and challenges related to academic career.

6.6 The Rejection of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy’s Confidence to Handle Task of Making a Realistic Planning

The hierarchical regression analyses found impressive influence on CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of assessing personal and occupational features and gathering occupational information. Nevertheless, CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making realistic planning was not supported as having a mediator effect on any of the dimension of intention to pursue academic career. This is due to the fact that items forming CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making realistic planning were mainly for those who already in a particular career. Furthermore, the use of CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making realistic planning as a mediator in the current study could be revised since the respondents are considered very new to have a good knowledge about academic career in which respondents were asked on the possibility of changing a career that they are yet to decide on pursuing. In view of this, Creed et al. (2006) had suggested to assist young people in identifying their career goal, which is more appropriate rather than enhancing self-efficacy in the hope that it will reduce indecisiveness.

In general, CDMSE plays a vital role in career exploration behaviour. Only the CDMSE’s confidence to handle task of making realistic planning is not certain since this dimension measure one’s decision after entering a career. However, both CDMSE tasks of assessing personal and occupational features, and gathering occupational information contributed to respondents in the current study in which it has a direct and indirect influence over intention to pursue academic career. Previous researches (Lent et. al, 1994; Sheu et. al, 2010) support the current finding.

7. Conclusion

The current research attempted to investigate the influence of some personal and contextual factors (passion, supportive role models, and perceived workplace flexibility) towards intention to pursue academic career. Mediators, career decision-making self-efficacy’s confidence to assess personal and occupational features, and confidence to gather occupational information, were also introduced in the study. To date, conceptualisation on the intention to pursue a career in academics is still inconclusive and debatable. Nevertheless, Malaysia has continuously made known its aspiration to be one of the potential higher education providers in the region by conveying its ability to cater ample number of quality academics. In line with this goal, continuous efforts to yield more quality academic career aspirants must be geared up. The study suggested the identification of academic career aspirants who have strong passion in academic career as well as the ability of the higher education institutions to mesmerize the workplace with supportive role models and ensuring workplace flexibility to intensify the dedication of the academics. Yet, perceived workplace flexibility was found to have the least influence when compared to the other two variables. Meanwhile, career decision-making self-efficacy of assessing personal and occupational features and career decision-making self-efficacy of gathering occupational information were well reported to partially mediate the relationship of passion and supportive role models, and the criterion variable (intention to pursue academic career). As a result, a workable theoretical framework is proposed. As indicated by the results, to successfully produce future quality academics, the initial and most important step is to develop the trust among final year undergraduates that academic career is one of the promising careers that they may opt for. For that reason, the decision taken by the researcher to merely investigate these individuals representing Generation Y looks appropriate. This is because from now on until the next decade they are the largest group of all generations available to accomplish the mission as aspirants’ academics to dedicatedly put Malaysia the most prominent international higher education hubs in this region.
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