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Grads 'too good' for their jobs

Socso: Nearly half of applicants in 2022 are over-skilled for their work

PETALING JAYA: Almost half or 40.5% of graduates are underemployed in semi-skilled and low-skilled occupations, based on the Placement Data for 2022 under MyFutureJobs, the Social Security Organisation (Socso) has revealed.

Underemployed refers to graduates working in jobs that do not require a degree or diploma, which are in the non-professional, managerial, executive and technical (PMET) categories.

These mismatched graduates are mostly employed in the services and sales group (25.7%), followed by clerical support (6.4%), as plant and machine operators (4.9%), and elementary occupations (2.4%).

Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar said from the 4.7 million vacancies advertised last year on MyFutureJobs – the national employment portal for job seekers and employers – 86% required only Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)-level academic qualifications.

"Nearly half of that number was for low-skilled occupations, with the service and manufacturing sectors having the highest demand, concentrated in cities in Selangor, Johor and Kuala Lumpur.

"However, most graduates working in this group possess a diploma (56.6%) or bachelor's degree (41.2%).

"This translates into a dominant demand for low or semi-skilled labour, despite a highly educated workforce aspiring towards employment in high-skilled professions," he said.

With a growing number of graduates entering the labour market every year, there is a need to promote the creation of high-skilled jobs, he said.

As such, proactive steps should be taken, including career profiling for final-year students, access to labour market information, and identifying available opportunities, he added.

Asked why graduates chose to take up jobs in semi- or low-skilled occupations, Sivakumar said it could be due to personal reasons, such as family commitment or mobility issues.

In terms of salary, about 28.7% of graduates' placements were starting below RM1,999 a month, he said.

"Usually, salaries in the labour market are determined by market forces. But to identify the right number being paid by an industry poses a great challenge.

"There are many factors involved in the wages offered by the private sector, such as company location, size of the industry, business association membership, type of occupation and degree of technicality, academic qualifications, level of skills, experience, and competitors in the market," he said.

In order to address the issue, Sivakumar suggested a comprehensive wage index or guide be developed for reference purposes.

"This will reflect the appropriate wages that need to be paid according to qualifications, skills and experience that an individual has obtained.

"The wage guide would not be a legal document but act as a guide for employers and promote better 'wages setting' in the labour market, apart from the normal practice of market forces to determine wages.

"This effort can be done through data collection from multiple reliable sources," he added.

Meanwhile, in the first quarter

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Minister V. Sivakumar

of this year, the labour market expanded by 2.5% with 16.65 million persons compared to 16.25 million persons in the same period last year, based on the Statistics Department's Labour Market Review First Quarter 2023.

Chief statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the labour force participation rate year-on-year increased to 69.8% from 69% in the same period last year.

Recently, Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek told the Dewan Rakyat that some 180,680 SPM students from the 2021 school session had chosen not to further their education.

This, she said, was based on data from the eProfil Kerjaya Murid (ePKM) system, adding that the number comprised 48.74% of the intake.

Fadhlina said 115,939 SPM school leavers in 2020 had chosen not to further their education, comprising 35.16% of the intake.

PMET jobs	Non-PMET jobs
Software developer	Factory hand
Restaurant manager	Building cleaner
Marketer	Sales assistant
Accountant	Crop production worker
Mechanical engineer	Warehouse worker
Human resources officer	Building construction worker
Early education teacher	Quick service restaurant crew member
Sales manager	Domestic cleaner
Tutor	Waiter/waitress
Civil engineer	Fruit and vegetable picker

