



The 21ST Century Accounting Career from the Perspective of the Malaysian University Students

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Abstract

Using questionnaire setting, this study examines the perception of the Malaysian public university students on the accounting career in Malaysia. This study seeks to identify the respondents' preferred accounting career, their career exposure, the factors perceived to be important for an accountant and the acquisition qualities of an accountant. The results of this study provide interesting responses from the respondents. More respondents prefer to become a public accountant rather than holding a management post. The respondents obtained their career exposure mostly from the professional accounting bodies and the factors perceived to be most important in an accountant are work performance and self confidence. Salary is also one of the factors perceived to be important for an accountant. The respondents also perceived the essential qualities of an accountant are acquired through education. The results of this study provide insights to the bodies of accounting profession, employers and academics on the nature and relative importance of the factors deemed important for the accounting students in their employment decision and their preferences to employment opportunities.

Keywords: Accountant, Perceptions, Preference, Career exposure

1. Introduction

Advances in information technology and globalisation have revolutionized the business environment of the 21st century. Following suit, our boundless economy now requires a new breed of professionals who have a broader knowledge of their profession and are multi-skilled. The new demands need a new breed of accountants that are more than just accountants or auditors. They are also expected to have a multitude of skills to enable them to become management consultants, financial analysts, tax experts, business system consultants, and many more. Of consequence, accounting education needs to be continuously evolves so as to produce graduates that can meet the contemporary demands. In 1995, the Minister of Education announced that the country is in need of 50,000 certified accountants by the year 2020.

The number of certified accountants in need further increased to 65,000 (Abdullah, 2001). The government is therefore encouraging the education industry not merely to provide education at the highest level for Malaysians but also to contribute to the nation's economic well-being. The government is committed to developing Malaysia as a centre of excellence for education and for this reason there must be a certain level of competence of the universities with compulsory supervision by the authorities. This has put pressure on the Malaysian universities to play their role in increasing the number of qualified accounting graduates and meet the nation's expectation.

In Malaysia, accounting graduates from the public universities who are interested to register as public accountants are required to become members of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA). At present, MIA only recognised accounting graduates who graduated from the public universities or from professional accounting studies such as Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Malaysian Association of Certified Public Accountants (MACPA) and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). That is, MIA only accepts candidates for membership who hold the relevant academic qualification listed under the Accountants Act 1967. It is therefore, arguable that the public university students would register to become public accountants as their qualifications are recognised by MIA. Several studies in the education literature have identified that students share a common belief that the accounting environment offer a higher supply of jobs compared to other areas of business (Paolillo and Estes, 1982; Wheeler, 1983; Cangelosi et al., 1985; Kochanek and Norgaard, 1985). Of consequence, such belief plays an important role in choosing their career decisions of accounting major. Further, these studies found their respondents preferring to become public accountants compared to other accounting profession (Carpenter and Strawser, 1970). In Malaysia, several studies have shown that accounting profession is still popular amongst the students (Goon, 1975, Samidi and Tew 1995; Hashim et al, 2003 and Said et al., 2004). For example: Goon (1975) found that the majority of her respondents had chosen accounting as a profession. Samidi and Tew (1995) reported that the profession is still the most popular choice 20 years later. Said et al. (2004) found that the accounting profession ranked amongst the two most preferred careers given by the public and private university students. It would be interested to research on whether similar results would appear when comparing the first and final year Malaysian public university accounting students.

The accounting education literature has suggested that students' perception derived from various sources. A large number of studies found that most of the career exposure encountered by the university students comes from the academics (Miller and Wager, 1971; Erkut and Mokros, 1984; Kavina and Pedras, 1986). Other studies have suggested the influence come from other sources such as from family, friends or recruiter (DeZoort et al., 1997). However, studies examining students' source of information in Malaysian context have not yet been extensively examined. Other studies have also examined students' perception on the accounting career. One issue being examined is the criteria in choosing accounting as a career (Carpenter and Strawser, 1970; Poallilo and Estes, 1982; Haswell and Holmes, 1988; Gul et al., 1989; Carcello et al., 1991; DeZoort et al., 1997). These studies generally found salary as one of the top five criteria influencing career decision (Carpenter and Strawser, 1970; Haswell and Holmes, 1988; Gul et al., 1989; Horowitz and Riley, 1990). Specifically, Carpenter and Strawser (1970) found that the top 5 criteria are first, nature of work, followed by opportunities for advancement, starting salary, working condition and job security. On the other hand, Haswell and Holmes (1988) found job availability as the top criteria, followed by prospects of promotion, salary, job security and job satisfaction. Said et al. (2004) found that accounting undergraduates of Malaysian universities perceived job satisfaction and salary are among the top three reasons why they chose accounting as a profession. However, apart from Said et al.'s study, there are limited studies that have examined factors influencing accounting career in Malaysian context.

The difference in the results above could be attributed to the sample used in these studies. Few studies have examined this area using junior and senior year students (e.g DeZoort et al., 1974). Others have used final year accounting students as their sample (e.g Carpenter and Strawser, 1970). Ferguson and Hatherly (1991) compares university students and trainees perceptions. Others compared students and practitioners (e.g Yunker et al., 1986; Reed and Kratchman, 1989) or students and academics (e.g Kavina and Pedras, 1986). In summary, the success of the education process depends not only on the physical facilities and qualified educators, but also as much upon attitudes, aspirations and awareness of the students themselves. The students' aspirations and awareness must therefore be taken into consideration in the future planning of the education needs. This study seeks to identify the Malaysian public university students' perceptions towards accounting career. The findings would hopefully assist the educational institutions to arrange proper guidance, counselling and exposure that can help the students to see clearly what opportunities lies ahead of them.

2. Methods

2.1 Research question

Globalisation has brought about colossal changes in the competitive and technological environment where the accounting profession is practiced. As a result the need for the accounting profession to keep up has become imperative. It is entering a new era with new expectations of those entering it. To meet the new challenges, the accounting educational process and the competency this process cultivates in accounting students should be parallel with the

changes in the accounting profession. Subsequently, apart from ensuring that the accounting students are armed with a broad array of skills and knowledge, the educational process should also expose these students to the boundless career opportunities that they now have ahead of them.

However, studies have reported that the public accounting profession is facing a problem of job satisfaction and high labour turnover rates of competent accountants (DeZoort et al., 1997). These studies have shown that one attribute to this problem is caused by the students' perception which is often not parallel to the professional accounting environment (Carcello et al., 1991; DeZoort et al., 1997). The university students often perceived accounting career as highly rewarding in terms of finance and status. These perceptions often come from their collegiate experiences. However, these perceptions in reality may not be true. Since the accounting course in Malaysia is becoming more popular, it is crucial that these students have a true and substantial understanding of what the accounting profession has in store for them and also the career opportunities available to them. In order to do this, it is important to understand the students' perception on the accounting profession. Although study examining students' preferred career has been examined in the Malaysian context, these studies have not included comparison between first and final year Malaysian university accounting students. Therefore, this study aims to examine this issue and develops the following research questions:

RQ1: What would be the students' preferred accounting career and who prompted such decision?

RQ2: Have the students had some career exposure and if yes, what type of exposure?

2.2 Hypotheses

The accounting education literature has identified few factors that perceived to be important in the accounting profession. These factors include availability of employment, job satisfaction, earnings potential and aptitude for subject matter. Paolillo and Estes (1982) found that availability of employment as the most important factor. Earnings potential, years of education required, aptitude for the subject and teacher influence have a greater impact on career choice for accountants compared to the other professional groups. Other studies found that opportunity for advancement considerations to be influencing the choice of a career in accounting (Trump and Hendrikson, 1970, Barnhart, 1971, Zikmund et al. 1977). On the other hand, Shivaswamy and Hanks (1985) reported that job security is ranked first by accounting students in their study.

In Malaysia, similar study examining students' perception of the important factors in the accounting profession has not been extensively examined. Similarly, studies examining students' perception on the acquisition of essential qualities of an accountant have yet to be undertaken. This gap in knowledge motivates this study to examine this issue by comparing the first and final year Malaysian public university accounting students. Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: There are no significant differences between the first and the final year accounting students' perception on the factors perceived to be important in the accounting profession.

H2: There are no significant differences between the first and final year accounting students' perception on the acquisition of essential qualities of an accountant.

2.3 Research design and data collection

This study focuses on the perceptions of accounting career of the Malaysian public university students. Specifically, this study seeks to identify whether the students would want to become public accountants, the sources attribute to the students' perception of accounting career (career exposure), factors perceived to be important in the accounting profession and the acquisition of the essential qualities of an accountant. This study examines these issues by way of a questionnaire survey. The first and the final year students in the Malaysian public universities are chosen for this study. The first year accounting students are chosen because, arguably, this group do not have any exposure on what accounting career is and has to offer. Therefore, their perceptions towards accounting career may be clouded by the lack of understanding on this career. The final year students are chosen because, arguably, after being exposed to the accounting process and environment for a certain period of time being in a university, their understanding on accounting career would be clearer.

A questionnaire design is adapted from a series of articles, namely, Carpenter and Strawser (1970), Paolillo and Estes (1982), Haswell and Holmes (1998) and Gull et al. (1989) with appropriate modification. The questionnaire is divided into 3 sections. Section A involves requesting the respondents' demographic profile. Section B seeks information related to respondents' exposure on the accounting career before and after they enrol to the universities; their preferred career choice, the main reasons for studying accounting, their intention to pursue professional courses and their expected starting salary in the accounting profession. Section C seeks to identify the factors perceived to be important in becoming an accountant. This is examined using a 5-point scale of 1 being extremely important and 5 being not important at all. One thousand five hundred questionnaires are distributed to the lecturers in charge of the first and final year university students. The lecturers are requested to return the completed questionnaires within 3 months. The

lecturers distributed the questionnaires to the respondents during their contact hours. Out of the 1500 questionnaires, only 802 responses are usable, resulting in 53.0% response rate.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Demographic attribute and main reasons for studying accounting

Table 1 sets out the demographic attributes of the respondents and their main reasons for studying accounting. Panel A, Table 1 shows that 42.3% of the total respondents are the first year accounting students and 57.7% are the final year accounting students. In relation to the Cumulative Grade Point Average (C.G.P.A.), information is extracted only from the final year students, since the first year students have not done their final exams. Panel B, Table 1 shows a larger proportion of the final year students (62.9%) have C.G.P.A. of between 2.00 to 2.99 whereas 25.7% of the final year respondents have C.G.P.A. 3.00 to 3.49.

<INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Panel C, Table 1 present the respondents' response on the main reasons for studying accounting. The results show that self-interest is the most popular reason for studying accounting for the public university students (72.4%). The second most popular reason is limited choice (10.2 %) and thirdly, is their parents' wish (7.1%). Specifically, both first and final year students chose to study accounting because of self interest (71.7% and 73% respectively). Due to changes in the accounting profession as a result of globalisation, an accounting degree alone may not suffice to arm the students with the skills they need to compete in a borderless world. Therefore, it would be an added value if they continue with professional qualification. The respondents were asked whether they have any intention to pursue professional qualification and their responses. The results shown in Panel D, Table 1 indicate that the percentage of students who wish to pursue a professional qualification is (55.4%) whereas only 37.9% state that they would certainly pursue professional qualification.

3.2 Preferred career

This section presents the response of the respondents' preferred career. It also presents the results of the persons responsible to influence the students' preferred career. Panel A, Table 2 presents the respondents' preferred career upon graduation. The results show that in general, the position of public accountant is the most popular choice (31%), followed by management position (24.7%). The results also show that between the first and final year students' choice of career, the first year students to prefer to become public accountant (37.4%), followed by the post of auditor (22.1%) and management position (15.6%). The final year students prefer to hold management position (30.7%), followed closely, public accountant (25.5%) and auditor (20.2%).

<INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

Panel B, Table 2 seek response on whether the respondents' preferred career could be attributed by the encouragement from persons outside the university. The results shown in Table 2 may also shed some light on their preferred career. The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that universities students' family (36.7%) is their major influence, followed by the public/society (22.2%) and the educators (21.1%). These findings support the common belief among Malaysians that the society in general and parents in particular, perceived accounting as a career where the supply of jobs is better than in any other areas of business. Similar results are shown for both first and final year students where family is their major influence and career counsellor plays the least influence in prompting their career decision.

3.3 Career exposure

This section presents the results on the career exposure encountered by the students. Panel A of Table 3 presents the results on the career exposure encountered by the respondents during their course of study in their universities. The results show that slightly more than half of the respondents (56.5%) did have some career exposures. Thirty seven percent of the respondents did not have any career exposures. The reasons given by the respondents are: (i) Unable to attend career talk or counselling due to time constraint; (ii) Could not see the benefits of attending the career talk or counselling and (iii) Unaware the existence of career talk or counselling program.

<INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE>

Panel B, Table 3 provides the results of the respondents' career exposure at their universities. The results show that in general, most of the respondents have had some career exposure given by the professional accounting bodies (40%). Thirty one percent of the respondents encountered their some career exposure from their lecturers and 14.9% of the respondents obtained career exposure through career week. Specifically, the results show that between the first and final year public university students, majority of both group of students attended career exposures given by professional bodies (37.1% and 42.1% respectively). The respondents were also asked whether they have encountered any career exposure prior to their university entrance. The purpose of this request is to determine whether the differences in career choice could be attributed to their career exposure encountered while still at secondary schools. The results in panel C, Table 3 show that only 27.7% of the public university students state that they never had any career exposure. Eighteen

percent response that they have had career exposures organised by professional bodies, which provide indication that they may have some influence on their most preferred career (public accountant) while they were at the universities.

3.4 Factors perceived important in the accounting profession

In section C of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate a list of factors that they perceived as important in the accounting profession. A five-point scale was used with 1 being extremely important and 5 being not important at all. The mean score of the first and the final year respondents were compared and analysed using T-Test to test hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 states that there are no significant differences between the first and the final year accounting students' perception on the factors perceived to be important in the accounting profession.

The results in panel A, Table 5 show that the overall perceptions on the top three main qualities that they need to have as an accountant, based on the two lowest mean scores are self-confidence (1.7930), self-motivation (2.0574) and qualification (2.0636). Specifically, the lowest mean score for both the first and final year students are self-confidence (1.9917 first year, 1.8223 final year), indicating these two groups perceived self confidence as the most important quality in achieving chosen career. However, the results show that there are significant differences at 5% level, between the first and final year students on leadership skills ($p=0.040$) and qualification ($p=0.002$). This indicates that the final year students perceived leadership skills as significantly more important than the first year students whereas the first year students perceived qualification as significantly more important than the final year students.

Panel B, Table 4 shows the perceptions of the respondents on the extent of importance of some factors in the determination of salary. The results show the overall mean scores in ascending order, the most important factor is work performance (1.9735), followed by experience (2.1229), then both qualification and hardworking (2.1531) and lastly, seniority (2.5446). Specifically, both first and second year students also agree that work performance should be the important criteria for salary determination and seniority should be excluded as important criteria for salary determination. The results indicate that there are significant differences at 5% level, between the first and final year students' perception on qualification ($p=0.038$) and hardworking ($p=0.005$). In other words, the first year students placed qualification and hardworking significantly more important than the final year students.

Panel C, Table 4 goes on to present the perceptions of the respondents on the extent of importance in determining an accountant's satisfaction. The results show that salary (2.1996), job responsibilities (2.2167) and interest (2.2933) are the major factors the respondents perceived that would make an accountant happy. Specifically, the first year students' perceived salary as the most important factor for an accountant's satisfaction but to the final year students, the job responsibilities comes first. The results however, show that the first year students perceived satisfaction ($p=0.034$) and job responsibilities ($p=0.009$) as significantly more important than the final year student. Lastly, panel D, Table 4 illustrates the mean scores on the important skills for work performance. The findings indicated that the overall perception on the most important skill that they need to have is decision making (2.1141). The results show that the ascending overall mean scores are speaking English fluently (2.1749), strategic planning (2.2091) and oral communication (2.2391). Specifically, both groups perceived decision making as the most important factor in work performance. However, the final year students perceived speaking English fluently and oral communication as the second and third most important skills that they should possess whereas the first year students perceived speaking English fluently as the third most important skills they should have. Both groups of students placed strategic planning as the fourth most important skills. The results show that there are significant differences between the first and final year students on computer skills ($p=0.002$), indicating the first year students placed computer skills as significantly more important than the final year students.

<INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE>

3.5 Acquisition of essential qualities of an accountant

This section also includes respondents' perception on the essential qualities of an accountant and on the prospect of an accountant. The respondents were asked to rate their responses using a 5-point scale of 1 to being strongly agree to 5 to being strongly disagree. A T-test was used to test hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 states that there are no significant differences between the first and final year accounting students' perception on the acquisition of the essential qualities of an accountant.

Table 5 provides the mean scores of the respondents' opinion on how the essential qualities should be acquired. The results demonstrate that the respondents agree that the essential qualities of an accountant are acquired first through experience (2.0552) and then followed by education (2.2095). The respondents are closer to being neutral on the opinion that the qualities are in born. The detailed breakdown on both groups of students revealed that they have the same flow of opinions. Nonetheless, there is a significant difference between the first and the final year students on the opinion that the qualities are acquired through experience ($p=0.006$), an indication that the final year students believed this point more strongly in comparison to the first year students.

<INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE>

This study focuses on the perception of accounting career of Malaysian public university students. The results of this study show that the most preferred career for public university students is public accountant. This is consistent with the previous studies where students favouring public accountants the most compared to the other accounting career (Carpenter and Strawser, 1970). One attribute could be the increase of career exposure encountered by the students at their universities from the professional bodies. In addition, the fact that public university students' requirement to become MIA members is less rigid could also contribute to this choice of career (Said et al., 2004). Since public accountants is the most popular choice among accounting undergraduates, it is suggested that all the parties involved in the accounting profession, from educators to practitioners, must work together to encourage the students to take the relevant steps to become public accountants upon graduation. Ironically, the results show that the final year accounting students prefer to hold management position instead of public accountants. Perhaps in attempt to increase the number of students to pursuing professional studies, the professional bodies may review their approach in their talks to these students so as to encourage more of them to become public accountants.

The results also show that majority of the public university students encountered career exposure from the professional bodies. This finding is inconsistent to DeZoort et al., (1997) whom respondents obtained their career exposure mostly from the academics. It would be expected that the public university students would chose public accountant as their preferred career. However, the results show a reduction of respondents' interest in pursuing professional study between the first and final year student. One possible reason is that that the final year students were not highly influenced by the sessions given by the professional accounting bodies. Perhaps the professional accounting bodies need to review their presentations since it would be the final year students who would be joining the employment market shortly after graduation. The differences in career choice could also be attributed to the students' exposure to career choice while they are at their universities. The results in this study show that majority of the first year students have never attended any career exposure whereas majority of the final year students have attended some career exposure (refer Table 4). This could explain why the final year students have different career choice than the first year students. They could have changed their mind as they become more exposed to the career options available to them.

Panel D, Table 1 discloses that the percentage of pursuing professional qualification is higher among the first year students in comparison to the final year students (45.4% first year, 32.4% final year). Parallel to the results depicted in panel B, Table 3, the large exposure to talks by professional bodies could have contributed to the large number of students responding either certainly or probably (total of 93.3%) in wishing to pursue professional qualification. To shed some light on the causes of this outcome, the respondents were asked an open-ended question on the reason for their decision. Interestingly enough, among the reasons given by the respondents who chose to pursue a professional qualification are to obtain recognition, higher qualification, higher salary; to obtain in-depth knowledge, competency; it is easier to get a better job and to be able to make it in the current competitive and global environment. On the other hand, some of the reasons articulated by the remaining 6.7% respondents for not pursuing a professional qualification is prefer to do a Master degree; prefer to work; the course is too difficult and financial problems. The respondents also tend to agree on the factors that are important in the accounting profession. The four most important factors are work performance, qualification, hardworking, and experience. They believe that these factors would determine their success as public accountants. In terms of accountants' satisfaction, the results showing salary as one the top three factors is consistent with previous studies showing salary as the top criteria influencing students' career decision (Reha and Lu, 1985; Haswell and Holmes, 1988; Horowitz and Riley, 1990), where salary was included in the top criteria influencing the career decision of students. The results in this study, however, could not support studies that found job employment as one of the top factors in the accounting profession (Paollilo and Estes, 1982; Haswell and Holmes, 1988).

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study would also be useful to accounting educators in reflecting whether they have play a major role in developing the students' understanding and awareness in the accounting career. This would subsequently enable them to focus on how and what can be done to further enhance their role in preparing the students for the practical world. Furthermore, they could look into how the university's curriculum and activities can be improved to tailor the students to fit in the contemporary environment more easily. The findings of this study would also be useful to the relevant universities in formulating plans on what they could offer so that their institutions could attract high quality students and produce highly competitive graduates.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Panel A: Year of study

Year of study	N	%
First	339	42.3
Final	463	57.7
Total	802	100

Panel B: Cumulative Grade Point Average for final year students

C.G.P.A	N	%
3.5 – 4.0	51	11.0
3.0 – 3.49	119	25.7
2.0 – 2.99	291	62.9
<2.0	2	0.4
Total	463	100

Panel C: Reasons for studying accounting

Reason	PUBLIC					
	First		Final		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Self-interest	243	71.7	338	73	581	72.4
Limited choice	39	11.5	43	9.3	82	10.2
Parents' wish	22	6.5	35	7.6	57	7.1
Relatives motivation	6	1.8	10	2.2	16	2.0
Friends' influence	5	1.5	9	1.9	14	1.7
Teachers' motivation	14	4.1	9	1.9	23	2.9
Others	10	2.9	19	4.1	29	3.6
Total	339	100	463	100	802	100

Panel D: Intention to pursue professional qualification

Response	PUBLIC					
	First		Final		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Certainly	154	45.4	150	32.4	304	37.9
Probably	164	48.4	280	60.5	444	55.4
Unlikely	21	6.2	33	7.1	54	6.7
Total	339	100	463	100	802	100

Table 2. Preferred accounting career and persons prompted accounting career

Panel A: Most preferred career

Career	PUBLIC					
	First		Final		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Auditor	75	22.1	94	20.2	169	19.9
Public Accountant	127	37.4	118	25.5	245	31
Financial Controller	44	12.9	48	10.4	92	11.6
Financial Analyst	16	4.8	15	3.2	21	3.9
Management Post	53	15.6	142	30.7	195	24.7
Others	24	7.2	46	10.0	70	8.9
Total	339	100	463	100	802	100

Panel B: Person responsible in prompting career decision

Choice	PUBLIC					
	First		Final		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Media	28	8.3	44	9.5	72	9.0
Public/society	62	18.3	116	25.1	178	22.2
Family	137	40.4	157	33.9	294	36.7
Friends	20	5.9	40	8.6	60	7.5
Educators	79	23.3	90	19.4	169	21.1
Career counsellor	13	3.8	16	3.5	29	3.6
Total	339	100	463	100	802	100

Table 3. Career exposure

Panel A: Career exposure attended at the universities

	PUBLIC	
	No	%
Never	299	37.3
Occasionally	429	56.5
Often	74	9.2
Total	802	100

Panel B: Types of career exposure encountered most at the universities

Exposure	PUBLIC					
	First		Final		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Career counsellor	36	16.9	31	10.7	67	13.3
Careers week	26	12.2	49	16.9	75	14.9
Professional bodies	79	37.1	122	42.1	201	40.0
Lecturer/ Academic staff	70	32.9	85	29.3	155	30.8
Others	2	0.9	3	1.0	5	1.0
Total	213	100	290	100	503	100

Panel C: Career exposure prior to university entrance

Exposure	PUBLIC	
	N	%
Career counsellor	36	4.5
Careers week	59	7.4
Professional accounting bodies	145	18.1
Teachers	104	12.9
Others	236	29.4
None	222	27.7
Total	802	100

Table 4. Factors perceived importance

Panel A: Important qualities in achieving the chosen career

Factors	First year	Final year	Overall Mean	P value
Self confidence	1.9917	1.8223	1.7930	0.064
Qualification	2.1694	2.2404	2.0636	0.002
Experience	2.4008	2.4336	2.3416	0.290
Leadership skills	2.5083	2.4460	2.3942	0.040
Interpersonal skills	2.3693	2.2369	2.2232	0.219
Self motivation	3.1281	2.0557	2.0574	0.176
Can work under pressure	2.3917	2.4650	2.3703	0.788

Panel B: Important criteria in salary determination

Factors	First year	Final year	Overall Mean	P value
Qualification	2.1074	2.1916	2.1531	0.038
Seniority	2.6151	2.4861	2.5446	0.256
Experience	2.1612	2.0906	2.1229	0.344
Work performance	2.0041	1.9477	1.9735	0.648
Hardworking	2.1405	2.1638	2.1531	0.005

Panel C: Important factors for an accountant

Factors	First year	Final year	Overall Mean	P value
Salary	2.1500	2.2413	2.1996	0.156
Job Satisfaction	2.2863	2.3228	2.3061	0.034
Interest in the profession	2.2490	2.3310	2.2933	0.125
Job responsibilities	2.2075	2.2246	2.2167	0.009
Status/prestige	2.5934	2.6456	2.6217	0.290
Prospect of promotion	2.4042	2.3979	2.4008	0.452

Panel D: Important skills for work performance

Factors	First year	Final year	Overall Mean	P value
Written communication	2.3808	2.4495	2.4183	0.156
Oral communication	2.2845	2.2014	2.2391	0.261
Strategic planning	2.2042	2.2133	2.2091	0.271
Decision making	2.1208	2.1084	2.1141	0.665
Speaks English fluently	2.1841	2.1672	2.1749	0.050
Computer skills	2.1583	2.3101	2.2410	0.002
Interpersonal skills	2.3222	2.2902	2.3048	0.720
Information technology skills	2.3937	2.4034	2.3981	0.071

Table 5. Acquisition of essential qualities of an accountant

Factors	First year	Final year	Overall Mean	P value
Qualities are in born	2.7364	2.8877	2.8187	0.092
Qualities are developed through education	2.2083	2.2105	2.2095	0.964
Qualities are acquired through experience	2.1715	1.9589	2.0552	0.006