Interpersonal relationship, workload pressure, work environment and job stress level among culinary internship students

Khairunnisa Mohamad Abdullah*

Universiti Teknologi Mara,
Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor, Malaysia
khairunnisa1864@uitm.edu.my

Nor Rabiatul Adawiyah Nor Azam

School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management
Universiti Utara Malaysia, MALAYSIA

Proposed citation:

Abstract

This study explores the influence of interpersonal relationship, workload pressure and work environment on job stress level among culinary internship students. A descriptive research design using a quantitative approach was used. A questionnaire-based survey was disseminated to 120 culinary students from several culinary institutions within the Klang Valley area who already finished or still undergo their internship program. The findings disclosed that interpersonal relationship, workload pressure and work environment significantly contributed to work stress among culinary internship students. Therefore, learning how to cope with pressure in a professional environment is critical to build in initial career to keep ahead in challenging environments. The culinary institutions should collaboratively work with the industry and monitor the students' work placement on a regular basis to ensure they obtain quality internship experiences that can positively impact the culinary career intentions after graduation.

Keywords:

Work Stress, Culinary Internship, Workload, Interpersonal Relationship, Working Environment

1   Introduction

Stress occurs when the human body is unbalanced and disturbed. It is triggered by the environmental condition and how the individual responds to the situations. An individual experience stress in a workplace when their work demands exceed their ability to handle. Work-related stress affects people at all levels of their employment, and it is not limited to certain fields, occupations, or professions, even during internship program. This supported by Wang, Chiang, and Lee (2014) mentioned in their study that internship students are affected by stress during their internship period. Stress can threaten the students' future and can negatively affect attendance, commitment, healthcare cost, productivity, and health (Mohd Makhbul & Hizam, 2014). Besides, Chandramouleeswaran, Edwin, and Braganza (2014) also specified that it had been shown to cause a significant decrease in all aspects of physical and mental health among students during the internship program.

The students' objective is to have a good impression on their internship firms to lock a job with them later. The university also plays a role in producing high-quality graduates who can readily find work. At the same time, internship firms may have the potential to maintain their credibility in terms of branding themselves as reputable company in the eyes of the general public. Within the realm of the culinary field, culinary internship allows students to get out from the formal classroom environment into a professional kitchen, along with all of the fast-paced and hard work demands it entails.

Work stress is the most prevalent issue among culinary interns, and it happens when there is a discrepancy between the workplace, workload, and their capability to handle (Mensah, Azila-Gbettor, Appietu, & Agbodza, 2020). Kim and Jogaratnam (2010) confirmed that it is certain that the foodservice industry is one of the most stressful industry. The core of its work is profoundly tied to the aspects as it involves rotations and intensive work, anti-social working hours and excessive fatigue (Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016). Wang et al. (2014) studied burnout, and occupational stress in the hospitality industry discovered that all the profession examined, working in kitchen environment were among the uppermost in burnout. Usual coping symptoms including increased intake of foods high in caffeine, fats, sugars and even increased alcohol and drug consumption. Besides, low personal achievement, high emotional exhaustion, and fatigue were found typical among the interns.

In addition, most of the students have no supervision or mentoring program during their internship period. As specified by Lee, Dougherty, and Turban (2000) in their study, providing an internship experience without a deliberate, intentional & dedicated mentoring element will make the students lost direction and demotivated. There are real situations where many of the culinary graduates are often very hesitant and uncertain about staying in the industry after graduating. Binder, Baguley, Crook, and Miller (2014) mentioned workplace stress and incapable of handling work assigned are believed to be the reasons why many students had struggled to complete their internship program, thus, doubtful to join the industry afterwards. It is not really easy to adjust the student life to a professional atmosphere. If their job requirements are

greater than they can bear, they can feel pressure and ultimately stress. They must adapt to the working atmosphere quickly by applying their theoretical expertise in the current workplace. When students begin their careers, they will face even greater obstacles. In line with Jenkins (2001) study, when students graduate, their perception of the industry change, and their passion for jobs drops significantly, with just half of them planning to stay in the industry. This will be detrimental to the industry because it will result in the loss of many educated and valuable young students preparing to enter the workforce.

Needless to say, being a chef is one of the most well-known work types exposed to huge work-related stress issues. Initial research informed that, nearly 50% of the total population suffered from depression owing to overwork (Yamauchi et al., 2017). Full-time employees stress, particularly among chefs, has gotten a lot of research attention. Culinary interns, on the other hand, have scarcely been the subject of research of work stress. Workplace stress is a rising problem that impacts the well-being and health of internship students, especially culinary interns. However, although a large number of culinary internship students were reportedly stressed at their internship placement, there is little study on factor that contributes to job stress among culinary students during their internship program. As regard to the issue, therefore, this study explores the influence of several factors (interpersonal relationship, work pressure and work environment) toward job stress level among culinary internship students.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Culinary Internship

An internship is a trained professional opportunity in a field of study or a job that provides valuable hands-on experience (Yaakob, Radzi, & Ail, 2018). An internship allows a student to develop new skills and learn new knowledge. It assists the employer in bringing fresh ideas and energy to their office, developing talent, and most likely creating a pool for future full-time positions. Wang et al. (2014) specified that practitioners have a huge potential for grooming students for jobs as a process of learning and socializing while they practice. Internships improve students' individual and interpersonal abilities, such as self-concept, self-confidence, workplace awareness, autonomy, and independence. Daniel and Daniel (2013) specified that students who had industry experience prior to graduation made the transition to full-time careers even easier. They had a better understanding of the workplace environment, were more engaged and adjusted to organizational culture, and were more productive when dealing with problems and situations at work (Maria, 2019).

Within the culinary profession, an intern in a restaurant or hotel kitchen aids the existing staff. The roles assigned can differ depending on the scale of the foodservice (Abdullah et al., 2015). The intern will serve as a direct help for the chef in a smaller team and be able to handle a variety of tasks. Then, tasks will be more framed within a larger team, and therefore in a more hierarchical operating setting. Activities will be

more or less complex in all situations, depending on students' abilities. Tasks of a culinary intern include performing simple kitchen tasks such as receiving, storing, peeling, cleaning foods, assisting in the food preparation, keeping the kitchen tidy at all times, perfecting the art of dish presentation, and many more.

2.2   Interpersonal Relationship in Workplace

The term "interpersonal relationship" denotes to a close relationship between people who work in the same establishment. Employees who work together should have a good relationship and be honest with one another to perform quality works and create a positive work environment. One way for organizations to cultivate healthy interpersonal relationships is to promote an organizational environment of interactional justice or respectful and neutral communication among employees (Maria, 2019). As mentioned by Büte (2011) mentioned that a good employer must avoid favoritism, make tough, often controversial decisions, show respect for subordinates without seeming to be nosy, and not abuse supervisory authority. Supervisors must be friendly, approachable, fair yet firm, and use the proper language in their professional interactions with employees in order to satisfy their duties.

Interpersonal relationships are one of the most common organizational stressors (Long, Kahn, & Schutz, 1992). According to Chung-Yan and Moeller (2010), interpersonal stress at work has been associated with depressive symptoms, which can negatively impact psychological well-being. Chung-Yan and Moeller (2010) added that some depression theories claim that interpersonal stressors increase the risk of depression. Aside from that, it would affect occupational psychological functioning, such as general exhaustion, burnout, daytime sleepiness, and its importance and utility.

2.3 Workload Pressure

Workload signifies the job assignments intensity in workplace (Syed et al., 2012). As stated by B. Lee, Kim, Gong, Zheng, and Liu (2020), employee work requirements vary even within the same organization, since workers of the same level can be assigned different tasks. They also mentioned that, educational qualifications, field of specialization, and organizational status can all play a role in workload disparities. Employee workload variability is also determined by the department to which they belong in most organizations. However, there is no assurance that staff workloads can be balanced even within the same department. Disaffection may arise from an employee's sense of workload balance or disparity as a result of perceived inconsistencies between his workload and that of other members of the organization (Sravani, 2018). Workload has a significant impact on job performance, and cannot be overlooked. According to Ganster and Rosen (2013), unmanageable workloads are cited by 46% of employees as a significant stressor. Employees who have no control over their work may experience burnout due to heavy workload. The World Health Organization describes burnout as a type of chronic work stress that depletes energy and diminishes effectiveness. Burnout has caused 50% of employees to leave their employment. Study by Lam, Wong, Ip, Lam, and Pang (2010) on the factors that causing stress among interns

and he specified that 90% of interns reported that workload and working hours were the top causes of distress for interns.

2.4 Workplace Environment

Behavioral and physical constituents are important elements of a normal workplace setting (Hafeez, Yingjun, Hafeez, Mansoor, & Cheema, 2019). They stated that the behavioral environmental elements bind the workplace employees' behaviors with one another. At the same time, physical environment refers to the elements connected to an employee's ability to connect with the working environment actively. Mohd Makhbul and Hizam (2014) cited in their study that the working environment positively influences individual employee behavior, thus, the quality of the workplace plays an important role in influential employee and workforce motivation, morale, and success. Human qualities like coping skills, including assertiveness, problem solving, time management, healthy working society, and environmental support are examples of resources that can help meet the stresses and demands of the workplace. Therefore, investing in work facilities, training, great leadership and working procedures, and the way employment is organized would help improve these resources (Sell & Cleal, 2011). Instead, negative work environment is one of the causes of employees' job stress. According to many studies, chefs commonly work in a stressful, insecure environment that is highly hierarchical yet unpleasant to work in (Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016). According to Pratten (2003), in the culinary profession, crowded workplace environments, long working hours, low pay, and lack of training were the main causes of turnover. The long authoritarian history has also become a serious concern.

2.5 Work Stress

Stress is described as a normal function disruption of body and minds (Panigrahi, 2017). It is a state where human body response to mental and physical demands. As mentioned by Ongori and Agolla (2008), many factors may cause stress in an organization, including lack of control over jobs, management style, etc. Stress, in moderation, is good for both the company and the employee. It aids in the achievement of individual and company objectives (Panigrahi, 2017). Nevertheless, employees' bodies, minds, and psychology will all be negatively affected by excessive tension. According to Syed et al. (2012), work stress is a type of stress brought about by working environments and has a detrimental impact on workers' success and/or mental and physical well-being. There is a lot of information in the general management literature on the impact of workplace stress on employee performance for full-time employees. Nevertheless, work stress may also occur during an internship period. Burmeister, Zhao, and Sen (2017) specified that, internship stress is characterized as a physical or psychological reaction to work demands during a student apprenticeship program, and a stressor that threatens a student's ability to adapt in the workplace during the internship period

127

3 Methodology

The main objective of this study is to determine the influence of several factors (interpersonal relationship, work pressure and work environment) towards job stress level among culinary internship students, thus, a quantitative analysis is believed to be the most suitable tool. The data for this analysis was gathered from 120 culinary students from several institutions that offer culinary program who already finished or still undergo their internship program within Klang Valley area through a self-administered questionnaire based on their actual experience. In terms of the questionnaire, most of the questions are adapted from past studies related to the area, and certain modifications to the questions are made to meet the study's objectives. Section A covered respondents' demographic details, such as gender, age, education level and categories of internship placement. The independent variable, the interpersonal relationship, was examined in Section B. Followed by workload pressure in section C and work environment in Section D. Section E was developed to evaluate the work stress experienced by culinary internship students. All of the data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. The researcher directly distributed the questionnaires to the participants and the information sheet attached to the questionnaire itself were also given to the respondents prior to conducting the survey. Based on descriptive statistical analyses, frequencies, mean scores, percentages, and standard deviations were used to record the data of the study variables. Then, the Pearson correlation was used to assess the impact of stress factors (interpersonal relationship, work pressure, and work environment) on the respondents' work stress level.

4 Findings

4.1 Workload Pressure

Table 1: Mean Score for Workload Pressure

	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.	I have too much work assigned to me daily.	3.64	0.895	120
2.	My work is highly repetitive and monotonous.	3.85	0.833	120
3.	I feel excessive fatigue and tiredness due to heavy workload	3.33	1.028	120
4.	I frequently have to work overtime.	3.25	0.993	120

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Results in table 4.1 show that many of the respondents agreed that they have high workload pressure during their internship. Looking at the mean score results, majority of them have repetitive and monotonous workload (M=3.85). They also have too much work assigned to them (M=3.64) and frequently have to work overtime (M=3.25).

Majority of the interns also feel excessive fatigue and tiredness due to heavy workload (M=3.33).

4.2 Interpersonal Relationship

Table 2: Mean Score for Interpersonal relationship

	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.	My colleagues do not show respect to me.	3.57	.844	120
2.	There is a lack of effective communication among members in our organization.	3.67	.978	120
3.	There is a lack of cooperation at work.	3.23	.783	120
4.	My supervisors are not really friendly and frequently use improper language.	3.66	.814	120

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

The mean scores in Table 4.2 indicate that most of the respondents slightly agree that most of their colleagues do not show respect to them (M=3.57). There is a lack of effective communication among members in the organization (M=3.67) and their supervisors are also not really friendly and frequently use improper language (M=3.66). They also feel that there is a lack of cooperation between workers at work (M=3.23).

4.3 Work Environment

Table 3: Mean Score of Work Environment

	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.	I always experience bullied in my workplace	3.05	0.775	61
2.	I have never been acknowledged and rewarded by the supervisor or management.	3.48	1.149	61
3.	The staffs like to make gossip in the workplace.	4.13	0.846	61
4.	My workspace is crowded and unorganized	3.19	0.994	61

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Table 3 indicate mean scores of work environment and the results show that most of the intern moderately experienced bully in their workplace (M=3.05). They also slightly agree (M=3.48) that they have never been acknowledged and rewarded by the supervisor or management. Most of the staff like to gossip in the workplace (M=4.13) and their workspace is also crowded and unorganized (M=3.19).

4.4 Work Stress among Culinary Interns

Table 4: Mean Score of Work Stress Among Culinary Interns

	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1.	I feel stress due to heavy workload during my internship	4.03	1.080	120
2	I feel stress due to interpersonal relationship issue during my internship.	3.67	1.076	120
3.	I feel stress due to negative work environment during my internship	3.41	1.116	120
4.	I feel stress during my internship	3.66	1.063	120

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

The mean score obtained for job stress among culinary interns specified majority of the respondents feel stress during their internship (M=3.66) due to heavy workload (M= 4.03), interpersonal relationship issue (M=3.67) and also negative work environment in their workplace (M=3.41).

4.5   Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Variable	Job Stress	Correlation Coefficient Indicator
Interpersonal Relationship	0.621	
	0.000	Moderate
Work Pressure	61	
	0.691	
	0.000	Moderate
Work Environment	61	
	0.739	
	0.000	Strong
	61	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The relationships between interpersonal relationship, work pressure, work environment and job stress among culinary internship students were analysed with Pearson Correlation analysis. Interpersonal relationship scored (p-value= 0.621) and work pressure scored (p-value= 0.691), indicating a slightly strong relationship between interpersonal relationship and job stress level among culinary internship students. The result also specifies a strong relationship between work environment and job stress among culinary internship students with (p-value= 0.793).

5 Conclusion

Taking on a full-time internship in today's fast-paced business world can be stressful and challenging at times. Learn to cope with stress in the workplace is a valuable experience to acquire in an early career. Based on study findings, majority of the culinary interns agreed that interpersonal relationship, work pressure, work environment are the factors that contribute to job stress during the internship period. Given the increased work pressure experienced by interns in the foodservice and hospitality professions, and the association between job stress and students' willingness to work in the industry after graduation, it is critical for training institutions and industry to take the initiative to reduce workplace stress.

Culinary institutes and industry must determine and agree upon the work duration, working hours, and job requirements before the internship started. It is recommended that institutions collaborate closely with the industry to identify a mentor within the establishments to supervise students' performance. This supported by previous study that employees who have been mentored, both professionally and informally, are more socialized into the organization and have better job experiences than others who have not been mentored.

The culinary institution should also monitor students' work placement regularly to achieve quality internship experiences that would have a significant impact on their future culinary career goals after graduation. Last but not least, increased communication and coordination in the kitchen and with management is also a must. Relationships must be built in order to foster a more positive environment both inside and outside the kitchen. A positive environment will make employee and interns feel more valued and engaged, but it will also be a key step in addressing the issue of bullying abuse and addressing the kitchen's hostile culture.

6 About the Author

Khairunnisa Mohamad Abdullah currently works as Senior Lecturer at the Department of Culinary Arts, Faculty of Hotel Management & Tourism, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor, Malaysia. She completed her Master Degree in Gastronomy from UiTM in 2012. Her research interests focus on culinary arts, gastronomy and social science.

Nor Rabiatul Adawiyah bt Nor Azam is a senior lecturer with the School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia. She obtained her Bachelor Degree in Culinary Art Management from the Univesiti Technologi Mara (UiTM), followed by her Master Degree in Gastronomy at the same institution and obtained Doctor of Philosophy (Tourism & Hospitlity Management. Her research interests are on Hospitality Management and Green Management, where she actively published numerous papers at international conferences, and hospitality and tourism journals. She is also a trainer in the area of hospitality management.

7   References

Abdullah, R., Harnizam, Z., Adnan, N., Nik Mat, N., Zain, R., & derani, N. (2015). Hospitality Internships: An Employment Advantage or Perilous Experience. *5*, 34-38.

Binder, J., Baguley, T., Crook, C., & Miller, F. (2014). The academic value of internships: Benefits across disciplines and student backgrounds. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 41*. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2014.12.001

Burmeister, M., Zhao, Z., & Sen, S. (2017). Replicating Internship Stress-Induced Depression In China. *European Neuropsychopharmacology, 27*, S363. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroneuro.2016.09.386

Büte, M. (2011). The Effects of Nepotism and Favoritism on Employee Behaviors and Human Research Management Practices: A Research on Turkish Public Banks. *Amme idaresi dergisi, 44*, 135-153.

Chandramouleeswaran, S., Edwin, N. C., & Braganza, D. (2014). Job stress, satisfaction, and coping strategies among medical interns in a South Indian tertiary hospital. *Indian journal of psychological medicine, 36*(3), 308-311. doi:10.4103/0253-7176.135387

Chung-Yan, G., & Moeller, C. (2010). The psychosocial costs of conflict management styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management - INT J CONFL MANAGEMENT, 21*, 382-399. doi:10.1108/10444061011079930

Daniel, R., & Daniel, L. (2013). Enhancing the transition from study to work: Reflections on the value and impact of internships in the creative and performing arts. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 12*, 138-153. doi:10.1177/1474022212473525

Ganster, D., & Rosen, C. (2013). Work Stress and Employee Health A Multidisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management, 39*, 1085-1122. doi:10.1177/0149206313475815

Jenkins, A. (2001). Making a career of it? Hospitality students' future perspectives: An Anglo-Dutch study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management - INT J CONTEMP HOSP MANAG, 13*, 13-20. doi:10.1108/09596110110365599

Kim, K., & Jogaratnam, G. (2010). Effects of Individual and Organizational Factors on Job Satisfaction and Intent to Stay in the Hotel and Restaurant Industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, 9*, 318-339. doi:10.1080/15332845.2010.487043

Lee, B., Kim, T.-Y., Gong, Y., Zheng, X., & Liu, X. (2020). Employee well-being attribution and job change intentions: The moderating effect of task idiosyncratic deals. *Human Resource Management, 59*, 327-338. doi:10.1002/hrm.21998

Lee, F. K., Dougherty, T., & Turban, D. (2000). The role of personality and work values in mentoring programs. *Review of Business, 21*, 33-37.

Long, B., Kahn, S., & Schutz, R. (1992). Causal Model of Stress and Coping: Women in Management. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 39*, 227-239. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.39.2.227

Maria, E. (2019). The Influence of Organizational Culture, Compensation and Interpersonal Communication in Employee performance Through Work Motivation as Mediation. *International Review of Management and Marketing, 9*, 133-140. doi:10.32479/irmm.8615

Mensah, C., Azila-Gbettor, E., Appietu, M., & Agbodza, J. (2020). Internship Work-related Stress: A Comparative Study between Hospitality and Marketing Students. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 33*, 1-14. doi:10.1080/10963758.2020.1726769

Mohd Makhbul, Z., & Hizam, S. M. (2014). Measuring the Effect of Commitment on Occupational Stressors and Individual Productivity Ties. *Jurnal Pengurusan, 40*, 103-114. doi:10.17576/pengurusan-2014-40-09

Ongori, H., & Agolla, J. (2008). Occupational stress in organizations and its effects on organizational performance. *Journal of Management Research, 8*, 123-135.

Panigrahi, A. (2017). Managing Stress at Workplace. *Journal of Management Research and Analysis, 3*, 154-160.

Sell, L., & Cleal, B. (2011). Job Satisfaction, Work Environment, and Rewards: Motivational Theory Revisited. *LABOUR, 25*, 1-23. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9914.2010.00496.x

Syed, S., Shah, H., Aziz, J., Jaffari, A., Waris, S., Ejaz, W., . . . Sherazi, S. (2012). Impact of Stress on Employee's Performance: A Study on Teachers of Private Colleges of Rawalpindi. *Asian Journal of Business Management, 4*.

Tongchaiprasit, P., & Ariyabuddhiphongs, V. (2016). Creativity and turnover intention among hotel chefs: The mediating effects of job satisfaction and job stress. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 55*, 33-40. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2016.02.009

Wang, Y.-F., Chiang, M.-H., & Lee, Y.-J. (2014). The relationships amongst the intern anxiety, internship outcomes, and career commitment of hospitality college students. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 15*, 86–93. doi:10.1016/j.jhlste.2014.06.005

Yaakob, H., Radzi, N., & Ail, K. (2018). *The Effect of Internship on Job Performance: An Assessment of Students' Perception*.

Yamauchi, T., Yoshikawa, T., Takamoto, M., Sasaki, T., Matsumoto, S., Kayashima, K., . . . Takahashi, M. (2017). Overwork-related disorders in Japan: Recent trends and development of a national policy to promote preventive measures. *INDUSTRIAL HEALTH, 55*. doi:10.2486/indhealth.2016-0198