

Final-Year Hospitality Students' Perceptions of Labour Shortages in Malaysia's Hospitality Sector

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)
2025, Vol. 7 (2) pp 72-87
© The Author(s) 2025
Reprints and permission:
UiTM Press
Submit date: 20th August 2025
Accept date: 15th September 2025
Publish date: 30th September 2025

Fawwaz Nu'man Muniar

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
2023862694@student.uitm.edu.my

Nur Balqis Zulaikha Hamidi

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
2023837292@student.uitm.edu.my

Azlina Samsudin*

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
Azlin6458@uitm.edu.my

Wan Nor Bayah Wan Kamarudin

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
UiTM Cawangan Terengganu, Malaysia
wnbayah@uitm.edu.my

Muhammad Afnan Hj Mahusain

Taylor's University, Malaysia
afnan.Mahusain@taylors.edu.my

Proposed citation:

Muniar, F. N., Hamidi, N. B. Z., Samsudin, A., Wan Kamaruddin, W. N. B., & Mahusain, M. A. (2025). Final-year hospitality students' perceptions of labour shortages in Malaysia's hospitality sector. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 17(2), 72-87.

Abstract

The hospitality industry plays a vital role in Malaysia's economy, contributing significantly to GDP, employment, and cultural promotion. However, the sector faces persistent labour shortages, worsened by high turnover, negative job perceptions, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite increasing numbers of hospitality graduates, many remain reluctant to pursue careers in the industry for which they are trained. This study, therefore, examines the perceptions of final-year hospitality students regarding the key factors contributing to labour shortages in Malaysia's hospitality sector. A quantitative survey was conducted with 101 UiTM Dungun students from Hotel Management, Food Service Management, and Culinary Arts programmes, focusing on four dimensions: nature of work, social status,

working hours, and job insecurity. Descriptive and correlation analyses revealed that working hours were the most influential factor ($M = 4.15$), strongly associated with social status ($r = 0.709$). Findings suggest that long and inflexible schedules reduce career attractiveness, while concerns about low occupational prestige ($M = 3.85$) and job insecurity ($M = 3.62$) also discourage long-term commitment. The nature of work was perceived more positively ($M = 3.81$), yet its physical and emotional demands still acted as deterrents. These results indicate that labour shortages are driven less by a lack of graduate interest than by unfavourable perceptions of work conditions, industry image, and stability. Future implications highlight the need for stronger industry-academia collaboration. Employers are encouraged to introduce flexible scheduling, structured career pathways, and employee retention initiatives; meanwhile, educational institutions should bridge expectation gaps through practical exposure and industry engagement. Addressing these systemic challenges holistically is essential to sustaining Malaysia's hospitality workforce and ensuring the sector's long-term competitiveness.

Keywords:

Labour Shortage, Malaysian hospitality industry, career perceptions

1 Introduction

In today's highly competitive hospitality industry, the presence of well-trained, high-calibre personnel is essential for delivering exceptional guest experiences and achieving long-term business success (Innerhofer, Nasta, & Zehrer, 2024). Consequently, educational institutions face the ongoing challenge of producing graduates who are not only professionally competent but also possess a positive attitude towards the profession, making them strong candidates for industry roles. Given that hospitality professionals serve as ambassadors of Malaysia's rich cultural heritage, the demand for skilled individuals in both the tourism and hospitality sectors continues to grow. Within the tourism industry alone, there is particularly high demand for qualified personnel across diverse roles, including tour guiding, event management, food and beverage service, hotel and resort housekeeping, and customer relations.

Moreover, Radwan and El Sawy (2022) emphasise that prospective employees in the hospitality sector must possess not only the requisite technical abilities but also the attitudes and values necessary to deliver the high-quality products and services expected by customers. Globally, employers in the hotel industry consistently seek graduates who are "job-ready," equipped with a range of essential competencies such as interpersonal communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, alongside the ability to collaborate effectively in diverse and dynamic work environments. High employee turnover significantly raises costs associated with recruitment, training, and adaptation, particularly challenging for small and medium-sized enterprises (Akhmedshin, 2025). The industry's organizations suffer from constant turnover, resulting in significant organizational costs and operational disruptions (Elshaer & Marzouk, 2019).

In addition to long working hours, the hospitality sector is often associated with low wages, high employee turnover, and perceptions of low occupational status, all of which contribute to its negative reputation (Ruth, 2019). Such challenges discourage many capable students from considering hospitality as a viable career path, ultimately

constraining the industry's potential for sustainable growth (Anthony et al., 2021). While the sector continues to generate employment opportunities, it is frequently criticised for offering positions that are poorly remunerated (Abdul et. al., 2020). To address this issue, educational institutions have sought to narrow the gap between students' expectations and the realities of industry work, thereby enhancing employability and promoting better career outcomes (Anthony et al., 2021).

Malaysia's hospitality industry is facing a critical labour shortage crisis that threatens its economic recovery and long-term sustainability. This problem is particularly acute among final-year hospitality students who, despite their specialized education, demonstrate reluctance to pursue careers within the industry they were trained to serve. The disconnect between educational preparation and industry attraction represents a fundamental challenge that requires immediate attention and strategic intervention.

According to Lock (2021), the total number of hospitality careers in the United States (U.S.) climbed to 13.13 million in December 2020. Furthermore, unemployment decreased from 23 million in May 2020 to 3.12 million in July 2021 once limitations were lowered. Vacant positions are challenging due to fewer applicants, even at higher salaries (Kwok, 2021). A labour shortage across numerous businesses makes it difficult to find skilled staff (Spieß et al., 2022). However, the hospitality industry faces more extensive labour shortages than other industries (Baum, 2015; Ferreira et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019).

A study on the Malaysia Centre of Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCenTHE) examined national initiatives to expand the supply of tourism and hospitality graduates, with targets set to increase the annual output from 20,000 in 2009 to 50,000 by 2020. In parallel, the proportion of diploma and degree qualified graduates was projected to rise significantly, from 13% to 50%. The study further highlighted that the sector is anticipated to create approximately 600,000 new employment opportunities, underscoring the critical importance of strengthening and expanding hospitality and tourism education to meet future workforce demands (Hussain et. al., 2020).

Even though most of the hospitality jobs have been filled, and employment in the hotel and food services industries is expected to reach 1.6 million by November 2022, companies continue to have significant turnover rates. Hence, even as the number of students increases, the Malaysian hotel industry continues to face labour shortages, forcing the industry to decrease the length of customers' stays. The hospitality industry faces persistent labour shortage challenges that are expected to continue for several years due to imbalances in labour supply and demand. It identifies multiple factors contributing to these shortages, including demographic decline, seasonality, competition for talent, and evolving employee expectations (Akhmedshin, 2025). The worsening labour shortage challenge represents a critical issue requiring industry-academia collaboration to develop sustainable solutions (Kwok, 2022).

The Malaysian Association of Hotels has reported a pressing labour shortage in the hospitality sector, particularly in operational areas such as housekeeping and food and

beverage services. This challenge is exacerbated by the reluctance of local workers to take up roles often perceived as unattractive, as well as the departure of many employees during the pandemic who have yet to return, leading to persistent turnover and staffing difficulties (The Edge Malaysia, 2025). While previous studies have largely focused on employers' and policymakers' perspectives, limited attention has been given to how future graduates, the upcoming workforce, perceive these shortages. Therefore, this study offers an original contribution by descriptively discovering the final-year hospitality students' perceptions of labour shortages in Malaysia, providing fresh insights into graduate employability and the sustainability of the hospitality workforce.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The hotel sector in Malaysia remains robust and continues to grow, offering a diverse range of job opportunities. The hospitality and tourism industry makes a significant contribution to the economy, accounting for 6% of the country's GDP and providing 23% of national employment, which translates to approximately 3.5 million jobs. It is the third largest segment within the service industry (Kutty, 2024). Malaysia's hospitality industry plays a crucial role in promoting socio-economic development and job creation, serving as a vital driver for the overall economic growth.

Labour shortages in the hospitality industry, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to operational disruptions. Despite high demand, vacancies remain unfilled. Labour shortages are defined as a sustained imbalance where demand for workers exceeds supply at prevailing wages and working conditions. Moreover, the National Restaurant Association reported that 62% of restaurant operators faced staff shortages and were unable to meet customer demand. The issue is not only about hiring but also about retaining employees. Many workers leave their jobs faster than they can be replaced, making employee turnover a constant challenge rather than a seasonal one. Employers often spend time and resources training new staff, only to have them resign shortly afterwards. Despite offering incentives such as sign-on bonuses and actively recruiting, many restaurants still struggle to fill shifts (Jennings, 2025). The subsequent section discussed factors influencing labour shortages covering nature of work, social status, working hours and job security.

2.2 Nature of Work

The hospitality industry is often described as stressful and demanding, with jobs involving irregular schedules, high customer interaction, and physically intense tasks. Tham (2023) highlights the prevalence of temporary and precarious employment, where strict managerial control creates pressure on workers. Similarly, Giousmpasoglou (2024) emphasises that income instability and limited social mobility negatively affect employee well-being. Mooney and Baum (2019) add that exploitation and unsafe working conditions in some contexts resemble modern slavery.

The industry demonstrates inhospitable working conditions and exploitation of vulnerable workers across different locations and contexts. Employment issues include low pay, precarious security, poor working conditions, high labour turnover, intersectional disadvantages, occupational ghettoisation, and employee sexual and physical abuse that can represent modern slavery (Mooney & Baum, 2019).

2.3 Social Status

Hospitality careers are often perceived as low-status and low-paying, which can impact students' motivation to pursue a career in the sector. Ho and Selvanayagam (2021) found that this negative reputation discourages students, while Tan et al. (2016) demonstrated a strong link between perceived social status and students' career choices. Similarly, Lusby (2017) argues that socioeconomic status acts as a barrier for many, limiting entry into the field.

Working conditions in the hospitality industry are characterized by inequitable pay structures, widespread underemployment, skills underutilization, and heightened work pressures. These conditions create significant societal ramifications and exert detrimental effects on employee well-being and mental health, leading to talent retention and recruitment challenges (Giousmpasoglou, 2024).

At the same time, there is evidence that these perceptions are not fixed. Ibrahim et al. (2020) suggest that students' exposure to the industry during training can alter their perceptions of status, sometimes positively, if the experience highlights opportunities for career growth, or negatively, if it confirms stereotypes of poor working conditions. This contrast implies that improving the public image of hospitality careers, alongside providing meaningful student-industry engagement, could mitigate the stigma of low occupational status.

2.4 Working Hours

Irregular and unsociable working hours consistently emerge as one of the strongest deterrents to entering or remaining in hospitality jobs. Go1 (2023) associates long and inflexible schedules with burnout and turnover, while Dahiya and Dighliya (2023) report that students see extended hours, combined with low pay and limited career progression, as major obstacles. Similar findings are echoed in earlier research, where demanding schedules were linked to job dissatisfaction and poor retention (Richardson & Butler, 2012; Kusluvan et al., 2010).

However, working hours can also interact with other factors. For instance, Ariza-Montes et al. (2019) argue that when employees find meaning in their work, they are more likely to tolerate demanding hours. This view aligns with the idea that job design and perceived career value may buffer the negative effects of long schedules. Therefore, while unsociable hours remain a dominant factor in labour shortages, their impact may be moderated by how employees perceive the overall worth of their roles.

2.5 Job Insecurity

The hospitality industry is often seen as unstable, with job insecurity heightened during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Bajrami et al. (2020) observed that uncertainty over job stability increased employee stress and turnover intentions, while Jung et al. (2021) highlighted its direct effects on organizational performance and sustainability. Similarly, Karatepe et al. (2020) linked job insecurity to reduced engagement and increased absenteeism.

Yet, the impact of job insecurity is not uniform. Cheng and Chan's (2008) meta-analysis suggest that its negative effects are stronger for younger and less experienced employees, precisely the demographic represented by hospitality graduates. This helps explain why final-year students may be reluctant to commit to hospitality careers, despite their training. The evidence suggests that beyond working conditions and wages, perceptions of long-term career stability are crucial in shaping labour supply.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design, utilizing a descriptive survey method to gather data on the factors influencing the labour shortage from the perspectives of potential employees. This approach is suitable for understanding and quantifying students' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions toward employment in the hospitality sector.

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

The study targeted final-year students enrolled in hospitality programmes at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Campus Dungun, during the March–August 2025 semester. As future entrants of the hospitality workforce, these students are considered well-placed to share informed perspectives on industry labour challenges and career considerations. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation from the main programmes offered: Hotel Management, Food Service Management, and Culinary Arts. Referring to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, a minimum of 169 respondents was required to achieve 95% confidence with a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error for a population of about 300 students. However, due to time constraints and a lower-than-expected response rate, data were obtained from 101 participants. This is within an acceptable range for descriptive research, as noted by Hair et al. (2018), who suggest that a sample of 100 is generally sufficient for most studies.

3.3 Instrument Development

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first collected demographic details, including age, gender, and programme of study. The second assessed perceptions of the hospitality industry using a 5-point Likert scale, focusing on factors contributing to labour shortages such as the nature of work, social status, working hours, and job insecurity. This section aimed to capture final-year hospitality students'

views on the key factors influencing labour shortages in Malaysia. The instrument was adapted from established questionnaires in previous studies and refined to fit the Malaysian hospitality context.

A pilot test was conducted to assess reliability (Table 1). Each variable consisted of three items. The Nature of Work scale showed excellent reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.929), and Job Insecurity also demonstrated high reliability (Alpha = 0.908). Working Hours recorded an Alpha of 0.776, indicating acceptable reliability, while Social Status had a lower Alpha of 0.661. Although slightly below the common threshold of 0.70, previous studies (e.g., Hair et al., 2019) suggest that alpha values above 0.50 may still be acceptable in exploratory or descriptive research where the aim is to provide initial insights rather than to build or validate a measurement model. As this study is descriptive in nature, the construct was retained to capture students' perspectives on the industry's perceived social standing, which remains an important factor shaping career intentions. Given these results, the instrument was deemed reliable and suitable for further analysis in this study.

3.4 Data Collection

The study employed an online survey administered through Google Forms. All procedures followed ethical guidelines, ensuring voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of responses. The survey was conducted over an eight-week period, from 23 May to 11 July 2025, with follow-up reminders issued to the targeted participants. Population data were obtained via official correspondence with the Academic Affairs Unit of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Dungun, Terengganu, to verify the accuracy and completeness of the sampling frame.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise demographic profiles and overall responses, enabling the identification of patterns and trends in students' perceptions. This descriptive approach was particularly suited for the study, as it provided first-hand and current insights into how final-year hospitality students view labour shortages in Malaysia. While the analysis is straightforward, it offers structured, clear, and meaningful findings that enhance the understanding of respondent characteristics and the factors shaping their perceptions.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings, which are descriptive in nature and supported by correlation analysis to examine the associations between the identified variables. While the analysis is straightforward, it provides useful insights into respondent profiles and the factors shaping perceptions of labour shortages in Malaysia's hospitality sector. Data were processed using SPSS version 27 to summarise

demographic characteristics, calculate mean scores for the key factors, and assess the strength of relationships between them. These results help build a clearer understanding of how final-year hospitality students view workforce challenges in the industry.

4.2 Pilot Test

Table 1: Reliability Test for Pilot Test

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Nature of Work	3	0.929
Social Status	3	0.661
Working Hours	3	0.776
Job Insecurity	3	0.908

4.3 Respondent Demographic Profile

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Profiles	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	41.6
	Female	59	58.4
Age (years old)	20 - 22	42	41.6
	23 - 25	59	58.4
Race	Malay	96	95
	Others	5	5
Educational Level	Bachelor's degree	49	48.6
	Diploma or Equivalent	51	50.4
Marital Status	Single	95	94.1
	Married	5	5.9
Area of Study	Hotel Management	64	64
	Food Service Management	21	21
	Culinary Arts	15	14

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the 101 respondents. Most were female (58.4%) and aged 23–25 years (58.4%). The majority identified as Malay (95%), with 5% from other races. Regarding education, the sample was nearly evenly split between those with a bachelor's degree (48.5%) and those with a Diploma or equivalent (50.4%). Most participants were single (94.1%), and the majority studied Hotel Management (64.0%), followed by Food Service Management (21.0%) and Culinary Arts (14.0%).

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

Tables in this section outlined the mean score results for each construct tested in this study. Table 3 presents the average scores and standard deviations for three survey items related to the Nature of Work in the hospitality sector. Participants most strongly agreed with the statement "I find jobs in the hospitality industry interesting" (M = 4.00, SD = 1.054).

Table 3: Mean Score for Nature of Work

No.	Survey Item	n	Mean	SD
1.	I find jobs in the hospitality industry interesting.	101	4.00	1.054
2.	I believe working in the hospitality industry is worthwhile.	101	3.84	1.015
3.	Considering the working hours and workload, the pay in the hospitality industry is reasonable.	101	3.58	1.121

This was followed by "I think jobs in the hospitality industry are worth doing" (M = 3.84, SD = 1.015) and "Considering the working hours and workload, the pay in the hospitality industry is reasonable" (M = 3.58, SD = 1.121). Overall, these results suggest a generally positive view of the nature of work in the industry.

Table 4: Mean Score for Social Status

No.	Survey Item	n	Mean	SD
1.	I believe that social status plays a role in shaping individuals' willingness to pursue careers in the hospitality industry.	101	3.95	0.911
2.	I feel that the hospitality industry is often perceived as having low social status.	101	3.21	1.084
3.	I believe that improving the image of hospitality work can help reduce labour shortages.	101	3.63	0.761

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for three items measuring perceptions of Social Status related to careers in the hospitality sector. The highest average response was for the statement "I believe that social status influences individuals' willingness to work in hospitality" (M = 3.95, SD = 0.911), showing strong agreement. The next highest was "I think that enhancing the image of hospitality jobs could help address labour shortages" (M = 3.63, SD = 0.761). The lowest mean was for "I am hesitant to pursue a career in hospitality because it is often linked with low social status" (M = 3.21, SD = 1.084), indicating a more diverse range of opinions regarding this negative view.

Table 5: Mean Score for Working Hours

No	Survey Item	n	Mean	SD
1.	I think flexibility in working hours is important.	101	4.11	0.809
2.	I am willing to work in shifts.	101	4.05	0.848
3.	I believe that working hours influence individuals' decisions to apply for or accept a job in the hospitality industry.	101	4.11	0.809

Table 5 presents the average scores and standard deviations for items related to perceptions of working hours in the hospitality sector. Respondents strongly agreed that "I think flexibility in working hours is important" (M = 4.11, SD = 0.809) and that "Working hours influence individuals' decision to apply for or accept a job in the hospitality industry" (M = 4.11, SD = 0.809). The statement "I am willing to work in shifts"

had a slightly lower average of $M = 4.05$ ($SD = 0.848$) but still reflects a general level of agreement.

Table 6: Mean Score for Job Insecurities

No.	Survey Item	n	Mean	SD
1.	I feel uncertain and insecure about my career prospects in the hospitality industry.	101	3.37	1.116
2.	I believe that jobs in the hospitality industry lack stability.	101	3.26	1.098
3.	I believe that job insecurity influences individuals' decisions to stay in or leave their jobs.	101	3.53	1.172

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for items assessing perceptions of job insecurity within the hospitality sector. The item with the highest average score was "I believe that job insecurity influences individuals' decisions to stay in or leave their job" ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.172$), reflecting agreement among respondents on its impact. Following this, the item "I feel uncertain and insecure about my career prospects in the hospitality industry" scored a mean of 3.37 ($SD = 1.116$), and "I believe that jobs in the hospitality industry lack stability" had a mean of 3.26 ($SD = 1.098$).

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Nature of Work	101	1.00	5.00	3.8053	0.77641
Social Status	101	1.67	5.00	3.8515	0.63329
Working Hours	101	2.00	5.00	4.1452	0.62257
Job Insecurity	101	1.00	5.00	3.6172	0.83451

Table 7 summarises the descriptive results for four variables assessed on a 5-point Likert scale among 101 respondents. Working Hours recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.62$), followed by Social Status ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.63$) and Nature of Work ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.78$), indicating generally positive perceptions. Job Insecurity scored lowest ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.83$), reflecting greater variability in opinions. Overall, the findings suggest that working hours and social status are seen as stronger influences on career choices than job insecurity.

4.5 Reliability Test

Table 8 presents the results of the reliability test for the variables explored in this research study. The table evaluates four variables: Nature of Work, Social Status, Working Hours, and Job Insecurities, each of which is measured using three items.

Table 8: Reliability Test

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Nature of Work	3	0.839
Social Status	3	0.553
Working Hours	3	0.776
Job Insecurities	3	0.851

Cronbach's Alpha values are reported to assess internal consistency for each variable. The values range from 0.553 to 0.851. Nature of Work, Working Hours, and Job Insecurities all exhibit good reliability with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.839, 0.776, and 0.851, respectively, surpassing the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7. However, Social Status reports a lower reliability coefficient of 0.553, indicating weaker internal consistency among the items measuring this variable. However, Pallant (2010) notes that alpha values above 0.50 may be acceptable in exploratory studies or with short scales.

4.6 Correlation

Table 9: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation Analysis			
	Nature of Work	Social Status	Working Hours	Job Insecurity
Nature of Work	1	0.530	0.507	0.206
Social Status	0.530	1	0.709	0.390
Working Hours	0.507	0.709	1	0.335
Job Insecurity	0.206	0.390	0.335	1

Note: $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive association between the nature of work and working hours ($r = 0.507$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that employees who perceive their work tasks and responsibilities positively also tend to hold favourable views regarding their working hours. This suggests that meaningful and well-structured job roles may reduce resistance toward time-related work demands, as employees are more likely to accept or tolerate longer or irregular working schedules when they find their work engaging and valuable.

However, when compared to other correlations in the study, this relationship is weaker than the strong positive association between social status and working hours ($r = 0.709$) but stronger than the weaker link between the nature of work and job insecurity ($r = 0.206$). These findings imply that while intrinsic job characteristics influence employees' perceptions of time demands, extrinsic factors such as perceived job prestige and societal recognition may exert an even stronger influence on how employees evaluate their working schedules.

Overall, these results emphasise the interconnected nature of job design and social factors in shaping work-related attitudes, aligning with existing research that highlights the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in influencing perceptions of workload and job satisfaction.

5 Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the key factors that contribute to perceptions of labour shortages among final-year hospitality students in Malaysia. The analysis, based on mean scores and correlation results, identified Working Hours as the

most contributing factor. It recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.62$), reflecting strong agreement that long, irregular, or inflexible schedules influence students' career decisions. The consistent responses point to a shared concern about the demanding nature of work schedules in the hospitality sector.

Correlation analysis further revealed that Working Hours had the strongest association with Social Status ($r = 0.709$) and moderate links with both Nature of Work ($r = 0.507$) and Job Insecurity ($r = 0.335$). This suggests that perceptions of working hours are closely tied to how students view the industry's image, work demands, and stability. The factor also showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.776), strengthening its position as a central issue influencing labour supply in hospitality.

These findings align with past studies by Ariza-Montes et al. (2019) and Grigoryan (2024), which highlighted the influence of working hours on employee satisfaction, retention, and career choices. Similarly, Richardson and Butler (2012) and Kusluvan et al. (2010) found that although hospitality students may value the nature of the work, they are often discouraged by workload pressures, stress, and societal perceptions. High turnover, burnout, and lack of flexibility further worsen dissatisfaction, driving individuals away from the industry.

This pattern supports the observations of Deery and Jago (2015) and Karatepe (2013), indicating that demanding schedules not only deter newcomers but also contribute to workforce instability. Moreover, the link between Working Hours and Job Insecurity supports earlier findings by Cheng and Chan (2008) and Osman et al. (2020), which reported that uncertainty in job stability strongly influences turnover intentions and career abandonment, particularly among young newcomers. Taken together, these results suggest that addressing the issue of working hours alongside improving industry image and career stability could play a significant role in alleviating labour shortages in Malaysia's hospitality sector.

6 Conclusion

This study examined the factors shaping final-year hospitality students' perceptions of labour shortages in Malaysia, focusing on working hours, social status, the nature of work, and job insecurity. Working hours emerged as the strongest concern, while social status and the industry's modest image also reduced its appeal. Although the nature of work was seen positively, its physical and emotional demands remained a challenge, and job insecurity still influenced career choices.

By using a descriptive approach, the study offers first-hand insights into how future graduates view workforce challenges in the sector. The findings suggest that labour shortages are driven more by perceptions of work conditions, social standing, and job stability than by a lack of graduate interest. Employers valued interpersonal skills such as customer care and cultural awareness, though further development in emotional intelligence and handling feedback is needed. Strengthening industry exposure through

site visits and practitioner engagement can help align student expectations with workplace realities and support long-term talent retention.

6 About the authors

Fawwaz Nu'man Muniar and Nur Balqis Zulaikha Hamidi are currently studying for a Bachelor of Science (HONS) in Hotel Management at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Campus Dungun. They are both dedicated and motivated scholars with a strong passion for the hospitality industry. In 2022, they received the prestigious UiTM Vice Chancellor Award for earning the Dean's List Award throughout the entire semester of their Diploma in Hotel Management. This paper marks their initial foray into academic research, demonstrating their dedication to expanding knowledge in this field.

Azlina Samsudin is the main supervisor, Wan Nor Bayah Wan Kamarudin and Afnan Mahusain are the co-authors. Both teach at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Campus Dungun. With 10–15 years of academic experience, their expertise covers tourism, hospitality, and consumer behaviour. They are active researchers with numerous publications on hospitality education, job perceptions, and sustainability in the industry.

7 References

- Abdul, R. A. W., Mohamad, S. A. R., & Aslinda, M. S. (2020). Intention towards pursuing career in hospitality industry among hospitality graduates in Malaysia. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(1), 41–50. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra2013>
- Akhmedshin, R. N. (2025). Effective recruitment and employee development tools in the context of labour shortages in the service sector. *Učenyje zapiski Rossijskoj Akademii predprinimatel'stva*, 23(4), 26–33. <https://doi.org/10.24182/2073-6258-2024-23-4-26-33>
- Anthony, G., Mensah, I., & Amissah, E. F. (2021). Undergraduate hospitality students' perceptions of careers in the industry: The Ghanaian context. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 11(2), 101–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2021.1958954>
- Ariza-Montes, A., Hernández-Perlines, F., Han, H., & Law, R. (2019). Human dimension of the hospitality industry: Working conditions and psychological well-being among European servers. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 41, 138–147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2019.10.013>
- Bajrami, D. D., Terzić, A., Petrović, M. D., Radovanović, M., Tretiakova, T. N., & Hadoud, A. (2020). Will we have the same employees in hospitality after all? The impact of COVID-19 on employees' work attitudes and turnover intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102754. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102754>
- Baum, T. (2015). Human resources in tourism: Still waiting for change? A 2015 reprise. *Tourism Management*, 50, 204–212. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.02.001>
- Cheng, G. H., & Chan, D. K. (2008). Who suffers more from job insecurity? A meta-analytic review. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 57(2), 272–303. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2007.00312.x>
- Dahiya, A. A., & Dighliya, B. (2023). A study of hospitality students' perception towards the industry. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 8(4), 203–208. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7796845>

- Deery, M., & Jago, L. (2015). Revisiting talent management, work-life balance and retention strategies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(3), 453–472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2013-0538>
- Elshaer, A. M., & Marzouk, A. M. (2019). *Labour in the tourism and hospitality industry: Skills, ethics, issues, and rights*. Apple Academic Press.
- Ferreira, A. I., Martinez, L. F., Lamelas, J. P., & Rodrigues, R. I. (2017). Mediation of job embeddedness and satisfaction in the relationship between task characteristics and turnover. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(1), 248–267. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2015-0106>
- Giousmpasoglou, C. (2024). Working conditions in the hospitality industry: The case for a fair and decent work agenda. *Sustainability*, 16(19), 8428. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16198428>
- Go1. (2023, January 3). Hospitality staff shortages: What’s driving turnover—and how to fix it. *Go1 Blog*. <https://www.go1.com/blog/hospitality-staff-shortage-turnover>
- Grigoryan, K. (2024). Labour shortages in the hospitality industry: The effects of work-life balance, employee compensation, government-issued unemployment benefits and job insecurity on employees’ turnover intentions. *Westcliff International Journal of Applied Research*, 8(1), 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.47670/wuwijar202481kg>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2018). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
- Ho, Y. Y., & Selvanayagam, G. (2021). Hospitality students’ working intention in the hospitality industry: A case study in Berjaya University College Malaysia. *Berjaya Journal of Services & Management*, 15, 64–78. <https://www.berjaya.edu.my/journal-of-services-management/>
- Hussain, K., Ahmad, A. M., Ragavan, N. A., & Leong, Q. L. (2020). Raising standards for hospitality and tourism education in Malaysia. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 12(2), 199–206. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-11-2019-0073>
- Ibrahim, M. Z. F., Mohd Saber, J., Raja Mustapha, R. I. P., Othman, N., & Salim, A. (2020). Factors affecting undergraduates’ perceptions toward career enhancement in the hospitality industry: A case of UiTM Penang. *ESTEEM Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4, 19–26.
- Innerhofer, J., Nasta, L., & Zehrer, A. (2024). Antecedents of labour shortage in the rural hospitality industry: A comparative study of employees and employers. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 7(1), 28–55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-07-2022-0334>
- Jennings, M. (2025, May 5). Why your favorite server quit — The real cost of hospitality burnout. *Food & Wine*. <https://www.foodandwine.com/why-your-favorite-server-quit-the-real-cost-of-hospitality-burnout>
- Jung, H. S., & Yoon, H. H. (2015). Understanding regulatory focuses: The role of employees’ regulatory focus in stress coping styles, and turnover intent in a five-star hotel. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(2), 283–307. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2013-0428>
- Karatepe, O. M. (2013). The effects of work overload and work-family conflict on job embeddedness and job performance: The mediation of emotional exhaustion. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(4), 614–634. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2012-0053>

- Karatepe, O. M., Rezapouraghdam, H., & Hassannia, R. (2020). Job insecurity, work engagement and their effects on hotel employees' non-green and nonattendance behaviors. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 87, 102472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102472>
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Kusluvan, S., Kusluvan, Z., Ilhan, I., & Buyruk, L. (2010). The human dimension: A review of human resources management issues in the tourism and hospitality industry. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 51(2), 171–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965510362871>
- Kutty, R. R. (2024, September 1). Secret behind Malaysian hospitality. *The Sun Daily*. <https://thesun.my/opinion-news/secret-behind-malaysian-hospitality-JP11962308>
- Kwok, L. (2021). Labour shortage challenge in post pandemic: Reasons, possible solutions and research directions. *Psychology and Behavioral Science International Journal*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.19080/PBSIJ.2021.18.555976>
- Kwok, L. (2022). Labour shortage: A critical reflection and a call for industry-academia collaboration. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34(8), 2807–2820. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2022-0103>
- Lock, S. (2021). Number of employees in the accommodation and food services sectors in the United States from 2011 to 2020, with a forecast for 2021. *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/196583/employees-in-us-food-services-and-drinking-places-since-2000/>
- Lusby, C. (2017). American and Macau student perceptions towards working in the tourism and hospitality industry. *Journal of Global Business Insights*, 2(1), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.5038/2640-6489.2.1.1018>
- Mooney, S., & Baum, T. (2019). A sustainable hospitality and tourism workforce research agenda: Exploring the past to create a vision for the future. In C. Cooper (Ed.), *A research agenda for sustainable tourism* (pp. 1–20). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788112413.00016>
- Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual* (4th ed.). Open University Press.
- Radwan, H., & El Sawy, O. (2022). Employability competencies in the hospitality sector: Employers' requirements and graduates' preparedness post COVID-19 pandemic: A case study from Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality*, 23(1), 70–91. <https://doi.org/10.21608/jaauth.2022.237322>
- Richardson, S., & Butler, G. (2012). Attitudes of Malaysian tourism and hospitality students towards a career in the industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 17(3), 262–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2011.625430>
- Robinson, R. N., Baum, T., Golubovskaya, M., Solnet, D. J., & Callan, V. (2019). Applying endosymbiosis theory: Tourism and its young workers. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 78, 102751. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102751>
- Ruth, A. (2019). Perceived benefits and making a career choice in the hospitality industry: Is it worth it? *International Journal of Research in Tourism and Hospitality*, 5(3), 26–33. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2455-0043.0503004>
- Spieß, T., Nickel, V., Faißt, R., & Zehrer, A. (2022). Employer attractiveness of family businesses in the IT-industry: The effect of personality traits and the moderating role of ownership communication. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.2025421>

- Tan, Z. M. A., Baharun, N., Wazir, N. M., Ngelambong, A. A., Ali, N. M., Ghazali, N., & Tarmazi, S. A. A. (2016). Graduates' perception on the factors affecting commitment to pursue career in the hospitality industry. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 224, 416–420. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.05.412>
- Tham, E. (2023). The nature of working in the hospitality industry: Evidence from 3S tourism in Turkey. *Tourism and Leisure Studies*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.48119/toleho.1192035>
- The Edge Malaysia. (2025, July 2). Hoteliers urge govt to help speed up foreign worker hiring for them too. *The Edge Malaysia*. <https://theedgemalaysia.com/node/72584>