

Internship program: A study on students' satisfaction

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Abstract

There is a current scenario where many hospitality courses' graduates are quite skeptical to join the industry once they have graduated. It is believed that this phenomenon is because the graduates endured hardship during their internship program thus changing their perception towards the industry. This will give an adverse effect to the industry as the students are not satisfied with the program. The purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between motivator and work experience towards the satisfaction of students after undergone their internship program. A total of 93 respondents were involved in this study. Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to determine the relationship between the variables. The findings revealed that all the factors are significantly related with the students' satisfaction towards the internship program. Both motivator, $r=0.584$, $n=93$, $p < .05$ and work experience factor, $r=0.575$, $n= 93$, $p < .05$ have moderate positive relationship. Hence, this study is very beneficial to educational institutes in preparing a better curriculum that may be referred by participating organization (in preparing a better internship program to the students) as to give better satisfaction towards the internship program.

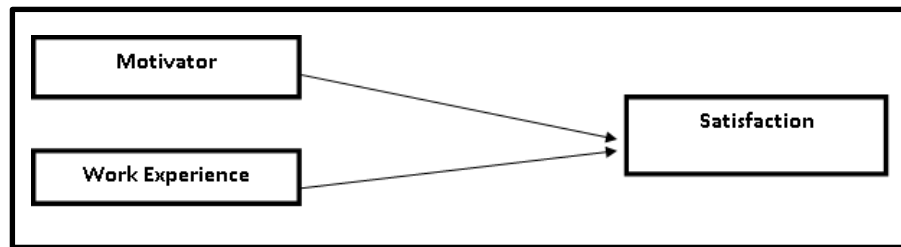
Keywords:

Internship, student, satisfaction, motivator, hospitality industry

1 Introduction

According to Tourism Malaysia (2014) tourism sector has contributed RM51.5 billion to Gross National Income (GNI) and was placed in the sixth ranks of the largest contributor to the economy in that year. There is much demand for qualified and skilled employees to ensure the success and competitiveness of hospitality industry as parallel with the development of tourism. True to this factor; the hospitality and tourism industry need more employees to cater with the increasing number of customers they served and can gain the greater level of revenue. Hence, more members of staff in the operation must be required (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). There is a solid view of internships as a critical factor in the successful completion of hospitality curricula and the smooth transition of students to the real world of work (Lam & Ching, 2007). Since internships are becoming more widely used as learning tools for students to help fill the gap between classroom learning and the practice of business, it is important to understand what aspects of these experiences make them the most worthwhile (D'abate, Youndt & Wenzel, 2009).

According to Jenkins (2001) as processed of their degree, the students' perceptions towards the industry are declining and the passions to work there are decreased significantly with just 50 percent of student have intention to enter the industry. This will give a bad effect to the industry as they will lose many new talented students that are being prepared for the industry. Thus, this study focused on examining the relationship between (independent variables) motivator and working experience towards the dependent variables that is satisfaction of the students.



Source: Marinakou (2013)

Figure 1: Theoretical framework

2 Literature Review

2.1 Internship experience

Internships can embolden communication and collaboration among students, faculty and industry leaders. Therefore, in attempt to establish a win-win situation for all parties, the industry should also develop strategies to create opportunities for interns to socialize with co-workers and supervisors, not only should colleges develop and

maintain the effective operation and quality of internship programs (Kim & Park, 2013). Students will be motivated to select internships that give them chances to develop their professionalism. More specifically, the students will enable to relate seven quality experiences as highly expensive components to their internship experience which are career clarity, effective supervision, and student professionalism, a sense of belonging, student productivity, learning, and development of skills. In addition, students on internship placement have a spirit to belong to a network of professionals (Wiseman & Page, 2001).

Furthermore, some academic recommend designing a curriculum for hospitality management courses to know and accommodate the needs of shareholder. This is useful in identifying industry's requirements and needs, also emphasizing the educators and practitioner's relationship, and realizing the teamwork available to develop the graduates that are appropriate to hospitality industry careers (Lashley, 2011).

2.2 Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the decisive feelings that value the job or job facilities, however some dissatisfaction of job is unwanted feelings that results from the job value such like blocking values frustration or achievement (Schwepker, 2001). Besides that, overall satisfaction highlights on the overall internal of satisfaction or dissatisfaction inside their individual itself (Wubuli, 2009). Cord et al. (2010) finds that students through some level of dissatisfaction with the tasks assigned for them but somehow most of the students marked that they know the reasons why they are assigned with these tasks. In addition, students' roles in the organization, either they were assigned for active or passive roles will affect to their satisfaction level of internship. Besides that, employers should not treat students that are undergoing internships as part-time employees because this will result in a low level of satisfaction towards internship and will have a high probability of destructing the relationship between the universities and employers (Tackett et al., 2001).

2.3 Motivator

Motivation is also one of the biggest issues in behavioral sciences and based on the crucial position and important role of human resources in achieving organizational objectives (Barzoki et al., 2008). Highly motivated worker tends to develop positive work-related attitudes such as they exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment (Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan 2008). Besides that, Wang and Lee (2013) stated that motivator is the driving force or factor to pursue and give satisfaction to someone as if their motivator is higher, the person will be satisfied.

In general, students will be motivated to select internships that give them a chance to develop their professionalism. Besides that, in the fields of human resource management and organizational behavior, motivation is always described as intrinsic or extrinsic (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). Extrinsic motivation occurs when employees can meet their needs indirectly as through monetary compensation (Osterloh et al.,

2002). On the contrary, intrinsic motivation is evident when the attitudes of individuals are oriented toward the satisfaction of psychological needs rather than material rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2.4 Working experience

There are some views of work experience, one of them are the perceived benefits of the current work for future employment and utility of the past work experience for the current job. Recent research findings have shown that the ability to relate past work experience in the current work is a confident spirit and therefore adds to one job satisfaction (Dokko, Wilk, & Rothbard, 2009). Active learning creates exposure to and involvement with industry, helping prepare students for work and offering enhanced opportunities for skills acquisition (Sivan, Leung, Woon, & Kember, 2000). The affective of working experience during internship program can contribute and give relations towards satisfaction to the student. According to Weiss (2002) the affective work experience is related to job satisfaction with another element such as judgments about job and beliefs about jobs also affected it. In this regard, job satisfaction can increase for this reason. The most vital factors contributing to students' satisfaction were the learning experience and the real working conditions (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2017).

3 Methodology

3.1 Respondent and data collection method

The population of the study was final semester students of Bachelor in Culinary Arts and Bachelor in Hotel Management, UiTM Pulau Pinang. Sampling frame was obtained from the Academic Office with total number of 101 students. Hence, the sample size for this study was 80 students based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. A total of 101 questionnaires were distributed. However, there were only 93 respondents who participated in this study by completing questionnaires distributed representing 92 per cent response rate. The questionnaires were distributed from 31 May till 16 June 2017.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire instrument consists of five parts which are work experience, motivator, satisfaction and demographic profile. The questionnaires are all adapted from Marinakou (2013) except three questions on satisfaction part that came from Paulins (2008). Part A used five-point scale ranged from (1) never to (5) always. Meanwhile Part B and C used five points Likert Scale on the level of agreement (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Part D collected the socio-demographic data of respondents such as gender, age and type of the organization they attached to.

3.3 Data analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Besides the reliability test, the statistical analysis used was Pearson correlation in determining the relationships between all variables. Besides that, the descriptive analysis was also utilized on each variable in this study.

4 Findings

4.1 Reliability study

Table 1 shows the reliability test for the study. The reliability and validity of the measurement instruments were assessed via Cronbach's alpha and pre-test respectively. Internal consistency test was conducted to assess the summated scale where several items were summed to form a total score for construct. Using SPSS version 21, the reliability test was performed where the acceptable Cronbach's alpha should be above 0.60 to indicate a good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2007). *Motivator* recorded a cronbach's alpha of 0.807 and it shows a very good strength of association. Besides that, *working experience* with cronbach's alpha of 0.775 shows a good strength association and lastly *satisfaction*, with N cronbach's alpha of 0.603 shows a moderate strength towards the study. Table 1 shows the result of the reliability test.

Table 1: Result of the reliability test

| Variables | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Motivator | 12 | 0.807 |
| Work Experience | 8 | 0.775 |
| Satisfaction | 4 | 0.603 |

A pre-test was conducted that involved 30 respondents to test instruments validity. The purpose of the pre-test is to determine that the questionnaire is free from any ambiguous or biased questions (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010). The respondents were asked to highlight any questions that are confusing or difficult to understand. Five hospitality senior lecturers were also asked to check on the questionnaire.

4.2 Demographic Profiles

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of students who have participated in this study. Out of 93 respondents, 71 (76.3%) were students of Degree in Culinary Arts while just 22 (23.7%) students of Degree in Hotel Management. There were more numbers of culinary arts student since the number of students who went for internship on that semester was higher than the hotel management program. Out of 93 student who sent their feedbacks, 19 students were male (20.4%) and 74 students were female (79.6%).

Forty (43%) students were attached to 2 departments followed by 24 (26.9%) students were attached to 1 department, 19 (20.4%) students were attached to 3

department and lastly 9 (9.7%) students were attached to more than 4 departments. There were many student attached with two departments as usually an organization will place students in service and kitchen operation department. The other who gets more than two departments is considered as bonus.

Table 2: Demographic profiles of respondents

| | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Type of program | | |
| Culinary Arts | 71 | 76.3 |
| Hotel Management | 22 | 23.7 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 19 | 20.4 |
| Female | 74 | 79.6 |
| Number of department attached | | |
| One | 25 | 26.9 |
| Two | 40 | 43.0 |
| Three | 19 | 20.4 |
| Four and more | 9 | 9.7 |
| Type of organization | | |
| Hotel | 79 | 84.9 |
| Resort | 14 | 15.1 |

Note: N=93

4.3 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis was performed for all items in the questionnaire and the results were presented in a form of frequency tables. Then, the measures of central tendency were conducted for each variable item in the questionnaire and the mean scores as well as standard deviations were reported. Table 3 shows the mean score and standard deviation for motivator. Students agreed that the motivator factor leads to student satisfaction as they learn a lot from their industrial training (M=4.12, SD=0.806). Meanwhile, students were less agreed with the statement that they were well paid (M=3.18, SD=1.351).

Table 3: Mean score and standard deviation for motivator

| No. | Items | N | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|-----|---|----|------|-----------|
| 1. | The organizations have a professional environment. | 93 | 3.88 | 1.112 |
| 2. | Students learned a lot. | 93 | 4.12 | .806 |
| 3. | The organization provides interesting work. | 93 | 3.54 | .815 |
| 4. | The organization has a good supervisor. | 93 | 3.70 | .976 |
| 5. | The organization made a valuable contact. | 93 | 3.71 | 1.049 |
| 6. | The organizations make students felt like a part of the team. | 93 | 3.71 | 1.049 |
| 7. | The student was well paid. | 93 | 3.18 | 1.351 |
| 8. | The student liked the co-worker. | 93 | 3.76 | .914 |
| 9. | The organizations have a flexible schedule. | 93 | 3.19 | 1.163 |
| 10. | The organizations provide accommodation. | 93 | 3.37 | 1.317 |
| 11. | The students receive job offer. | 93 | 3.39 | 1.074 |
| 12. | The students will receive school praise. | 93 | 3.40 | 1.085 |

Table 4 shows the mean score and standard deviation for work experience. Students agreed that organization provides new knowledge (M=3.80, SD=1.027) and this affect the students’ satisfaction. Meanwhile, students scored less on the statement that the organization task was relevant to their interest (M=3.60, SD=1.1.25).

Table 4: Mean score and standard deviation for work experience

| No. | Items | N | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|-----|---|----|------|-----------|
| 1. | The organizations give a meaningful task. | 93 | 3.74 | .966 |
| 2. | The organization task relevance to my studies. | 93 | 3.73 | .946 |
| 3. | The organization task relevance to my interest. | 93 | 3.60 | 1.105 |
| 4. | Organization doing supervision toward students. | 93 | 3.66 | 1.078 |
| 5. | Staff of organization always available for help. | 93 | 3.76 | 1.036 |
| 6. | The organizations provide new knowledge. | 93 | 3.80 | 1.027 |
| 7. | The organizations teach a new skill. | 93 | 3.65 | .928 |
| 8. | The organization increase student self-knowledge. | 93 | 3.62 | .908 |

Table 5 illustrates the mean score and standard deviation for student’s satisfaction. Students who were satisfied with their internship program had the highest mean score (M=3.56, SD=1.026). The lowest mean score was ‘I am satisfied with the pay I received from my internship’ (M=2.19, SD=1.076).

Table 5: Mean score and standard deviation for student’s satisfaction

| No. | Items | N | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|-----|---|----|------|-----------|
| 1. | Students are satisfied with their internship program. | 93 | 3.56 | 1.026 |
| 2. | I am satisfied with the variety of activities my internship offers. | 93 | 3.37 | 1.071 |
| 3. | I am satisfied with the opportunities that my internship had given. | 93 | 3.18 | .943 |
| 4. | I am satisfied with the pay I received from my internship. | 93 | 2.19 | 1.076 |

4.4 Correlation between motivator, work experience and student’s satisfaction

The Pearson correlation analysis was used to identify the relationship of bivariate between each independent variable that are motivator and working experience with dependent variable that is internship satisfaction. Coefficient range of .091 to 1.00 indicates as very strong relationship, range between 0.71 to 0.90 as high relationship, range between 0.41 and 0.70 as moderate relationship, range between 0.21 to 0.40 as small but definite relationship and lastly range between .00 to 0.20 as slight, almost negligible relationship (Sekaran, 2003).

Based on the result in Table 6, the pearson correlation value is $r=0.584$, $n=93$ with significant level (2 tailed) p value = .000. Sekaran (2003) stated that range 0.41 to 0.70 as moderate relationship. Hence, the relationships of motivator factor towards satisfaction of students’ internship are in positive moderate relationship. The higher the motivator factors the higher is the satisfaction of students. Lastly, for the pearson correlation analysis between working experience (independent variable) and satisfaction (dependent variable), the value is $r=0.575$, $n=93$ with significant level (2 tailed) p value = .000. According to Sekaran (2003) range 0.41 to 0.70 signifies a moderate relationship. Hence, the relationships of working experience factor and satisfaction of student’s internship are in positive moderate relationship. The higher the working experience factor, the higher is the satisfaction of the students.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation coefficients

| Scale | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------------|---|--------|---|--------|
| 1. Satisfaction | - | .584** | | .575** |
| 2. Motivator | | - | - | .643** |
| 3. Work experience | | | | - |

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

This finding is in line with Wang and Lee (2013) where they stated that motivator is the driving force to pursue and giving satisfaction to someone and if their motivators are higher, the person will be more satisfied. In suggestion, to increase the level of

motivator factor impact toward satisfaction of student some effort need to be worked on such as students should be paid sufficiently to increase their motivation towards their internship and can gain a satisfied internship program. Besides that, some of them did not even receive a single cent from their internship and it can reduce their motivation. This is supported by Milne (2007) that reward and recognition programs can positively enhance motivation, performance and interest within an organization attached.

The findings are also supported Munir and Rahman (2016). They stated that de-motivation will lead to lower productivity, stress and conflict in workplace and contribute to the dissatisfaction of workers or in our case the interns themselves. As a suggestion, the organization may reduce the de-motivator factor in their sector by paying well the students. This is supported by Lam and Ching (2007) that the most common factors that create dissatisfaction and decreased motivation of interns are found to be poor or no pay, poor employee-supervisor relations, poor communication, lack of coordination and disorganized work environment, limited or no delegation, long working hours, and overall hectic working environment. Poor payment of the interns is also agreed by Dickerson (2009). He found that low pay and long working hours are less valued by interns.

Research by Dokko et al. (2009) showed that when prior related work experience was directly applied to behavioral work outcomes, the relationship was negative. However, when task- relevant knowledge and skills from the prior work were used, the relationship was positive. For suggestion, the organization can give the students a task that is relevant to their interest, by this, it can enhance their working experience. Usually students who go for the internship have a desire to try on the thing that interest them. Hence, the organization should try giving tasks that are related to their interest. In addition, the organization should have good supervisors as they can really train the interns as Roney and Oztin (2007) stated that managers are not properly trained and prepared to enhance and contribute to the students experience during the internship.

5 Conclusion

The study sample is small which consists of 93 respondents. Thus, the generalization of the findings was not strong enough to represent the whole population of Hotel and Tourism students. Further study should focus on other factors that may give an impact on student's satisfaction towards their internship experience. In the nutshell, this study will help to increase the knowledge of the hospitality industry and academic institutions on the needs of the student during internship as well as to increase student's satisfaction towards their internship program.

6 About the author

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