UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

FACTORS INFLUENCING INTERNSHIP SATISFACTION AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO SELF-PERCEIVED COMPETENCE AMONG HOSPITALITY UNDERGRADUATES OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

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FSTM 2021 25

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By

SYAFINAZ BINTI RUSLAN

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Most of the local universities integrate internship programs in their curriculum design, which intends to enhance students' skills and promote the real work environment. The internship program benefits the students by giving opportunities to polish their career skills and to gain on-the-job experiences. Previous literature has proven that the work experiences of an internship program make a significant impact on students' career choices. Students who had undergone the internship program, particularly in the hospitality industry, agreed to some extent that previous internship satisfaction would have a strong influence on their career intentions. However, the essence of successful internship experiences lies in the satisfaction of students with their internships. Internship satisfaction is one area of research that has been largely neglected and little research has been done on it. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the effect between job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors with the internship satisfaction among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. Besides, this study aims to determine the effect of internship satisfaction and self-perceived competence among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. This study also aims to assess the most influential factors of internship satisfaction among job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors. A quantitative research method was employed in this study, where it involved 302 hospitality undergraduates from eight public universities. The relationships among variables were analysed with Pearson Correlation analysis, multiple regression, linear regression and descriptive analysis. The models presented were evaluated with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Based on the findings from the PLS-SEM analysis, three independent variables (job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors) had positively influenced internship satisfaction, so does internship satisfaction had positively influenced self-perceived competence. This study also found that organizational environment had the highest impact towards internship satisfaction (beta = 0.393), followed by job characteristics (beta = 0.301), and

contextual factors (beta = 0.232). In conclusion, this study may extend the current literature on internship satisfaction and shed some light on related stakeholders, particularly universities, to strategize for a more effective internship program. This will enhance students' internship satisfaction and later escalate their competencies for better emploment opportunities.

Keywords: Competencies, contextual factors, internship satisfaction, job characteristics, Malaysian public universities, and organizational environment.

FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI KEPUASAN LATIHAN INDUSTRI DAN HUBUNGAN MEREKA TERHADAP KOMPETENSI PENILAIAN DIRI DIKALANGAN SISWAZAH HOSPITALITI DI UNIVERSITI AWAM MALAYSIA

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Sebilangan besar universiti tempatan telah mengintegrasikan program latihan industri ke dalam reka bentuk kurikulum mereka, dalam usaha untuk meningkatkan kemahiran pelajar dan mempromosikan persekitaran kerja yang sebenar. Program latihan industri ini memberi manfaat kepada pelajar dengan memberi peluang untuk menggilap kemahiran kerjaya mereka dan memperoleh pengalaman di tempat kerja. Penyelidikan sebelum ini telah membuktikan bahawa pengalaman kerja yang diperolehi semasa program latihan industri telah memberi kesan yang besar terhadap penentu kerjaya di kalangan pelajar. Pelajar yang telah menjalani latihan industri, terutamanya di dalam industri perhotelan, bersetuju bahawa kepuasan terhadap pengalaman latihan industri memberi pengaruh yang kuat terhadap penentuan kerjaya mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, inti pati latihan industri yang berkesan bergantung kepada kepuasan pelajar terhadap latihan industri masing-masing. Kepuasan latihan industri adalah salah satu bidang penyelidikan yang sebahagian besarnya telah diabaikan dan hanya sedikit sahaja kajian yang telah dilakukan. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti kesan antara ciri pekerjaan, persekitaran organisasi, dan faktor kontekstual terhadap kepuasan latihan industri di kalangan pelajar sarjana hospitaliti di universiti awam Malaysia. Di samping itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesan kepuasan latihan industri dan kecekapan diri di kalangan pelajar sarjana hospitaliti di universiti awam Malaysia. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menilai faktor kepuasan latihan industri yang paling berpengaruh di antara ciri pekerjaan, persekitaran organisasi, dan faktor kontekstual. Kaedah penyelidikan kuantitatif telah dilaksanakan, melibatkan 302 siswazah hospitaliti dari lapan universiti awam yang menawarkan program sarjana muda dalam hospitaliti dan perkhidmatan makanan di Malaysia. Hubungan antara pemboleh ubah dianalisis dengan analisis Korelasi Pearson, regresi berganda, regresi linear dan analisis deskriptif. Model yang direka juga dinilai menggunakan perisian Pemodelan Persamaan Struktural Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM). Berdasarkan penemuan dari analisis PLS-SEM, ketiga-tiga pemboleh ubah (ciri pekerjaan, persekitaran organisasi, dan faktor kontekstual) telah mempengaruhi kepuasan latihan industri secara

iii

positif, begitu juga dengan kepuasan latihan industri secara positif mempengaruhi kompetensi penilaian diri. Disamping itu, persekitaran organisasi mempunyai kesan tertinggi terhadap kepuasan latihan industri (beta = 0.393), diikuti oleh ciri pekerjaan (beta = 0.301), dan faktor kontekstual (beta = 0.232). Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian ini dapat memperluas literatur terkini tentang kepuasan latihan industri dan memberi sedikit penerangan kepada pihak berkepentingan, khususnya universiti, untuk menyusun strategi bagi program latihan industri pelajar dan kemudian meningkatkan kecekapan mereka bagi peluang pekerjaan yang lebih baik.

Kata kunci: Kompetensi, faktor kontekstual, kepuasan latihan industri, ciri pekerjaan, universiti awam Malaysia, dan persekitaran organisasi.

iv

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Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:
- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) were adhered to.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Abstract Conceptualisation
AE	Active Experimentation
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CE	Concrete Experience
CF	Contextual Factors
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CR	Composite Reliability
f^2	Effect Size
HLIs	Higher Learning Institutions
HTMT	Heterotrait- Monotrait
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IQR	Interquatile Range
IS	Internship Satisfaction
JC	Job Characteristics
JCM	Job Characteristics Model
KDU	Kolej Damansara Utama
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MSU	Management and Science University
My3S	Malaysian Soft Skills Scale
OE	Organizational Environment
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares- Structural Equation Modelling
Q^2	Predictive Relevance
R^2	Coefficient Determination

RO	Reflective Observation
RO1	Research Objective 1
RO2	Research Objective 2
RO3	Research Objective 3
SPC	Self-perceived Competence
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UCSI	University College Sedaya International
UiTM	Universiti Teknologi Mara
UMK	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan
UMS	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UMT	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
UNITAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
VIF	Variance Inflation Factors

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, hypotheses development, and significance of the study. Additionally, this chapter also presented an explanation for each of the chapter layouts; from chapter one until chapter five, together with the definition of major terms. The conclusion is presented at the end of the topic.

1.2 Research Background

The purpose of the research background is to give an overview of the research context and providing initial support on the relevance of conducting this research study. There are three sections involved comprising the importance of internship, Malaysian graduates' employability, and partnering industry and education for curricular enchancement.

1.2.1 The Importance of Internship

Previously, there are several suggestions proposed by researchers to the academics and practitioners in overcoming ill-prepared graduates, and one of the suggestions is to infuse and develop the required skills during an internship (Walo, 2000). The internship is a platform providing a professional learning experience that integrates knowledge and theory learned in classrooms with the practical work experience (Barrows & Bosselman, 1999). Also, the internship is the best way of training, particularly in the hospitality industry, as it is the most excellent approach for students to experience the real world of the working environment within a specific period specifically to assist their future career path (Scott, 1992).

Futhermore, the ideas of internship could be the preliminary level of working experiences among university students to assist in their career decision making and closing the gap between the perceptions and expectations of the development of self-competencies are also argued by Brooks et al. (1995). Undoubtedly, many previous academic researchers had argued that the benefits and positive outcomes attain from internships are aplenty. Furthermore, the successful internship programs is measured in the satisfaction of students with their internships. Thus, the outcome of the internship experience is crucial and significant to measure, in order to provide for better developmental experiences for students as it will assist them for their career intentions (Huang & Ja, 2010).

1

From the employer's perspectives, the content of internship program itself was designing to determine what type of internship structure will work best for the students that will fit within the company's goals and culture (Anjum, 2020). For examples:

a) What does the organization hope to gain from the program?

b) Is the organization looking to fulfill a need on a specific project?

c) Will this internship encompass one major project or entail a variety of small projects?

d) What are the tools and workspace necessary to provide the student?

e) What talents, academic background and experience do employer want in an intern?

f) Who will be primarily responsible for the intern(s)? Will that person be a mentor, supervisor, or both?

However, there is no agreement to finalize the program structure outlining the best practices in internship design (Jack et al., 2017). Each institution has its own requirements and partners in industry. It is imperative for program administrators to determine how many hours of internship are adequate as well as what types of experiences recruiters find most beneficial (Gursoy, Rahman, & Swanger, 2012; Huang & Lin, 2011). If educators build a curriculum without adequate input from industry leaders, there is the potential for deficiencies in students' skill and marketability upon graduation. By knowing potential employers' expectations and the perceived preparedness of the students themselves, educators will have the ability to adjust academic programs accordingly. This will allow for the most effective program for students as well as enhance the labor pool upon graduation. Although the number of hospitality programs within higher education has grown considerably over the last three decades, there is no standardization of curriculum to date (Crockett, 2002).

1.2.2 Malaysian Graduates' Employability

Malaysia has shown a huge number of application for entering the job market among fresh graduates and this trend continuously rising over the years (Rahmah et al., 2011; Sirat et al., 2012). To date, Malaysia still encounter the issue of rising graduate unemployment despite significant changes in the Malaysian economy and also transitional demand by the industries. One of the factors affected to the graduate unemployment all over the world is due to the mismatch of employability skills among stakeholders (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

The fact that Malaysian graduates are still encountering the lacking of requisite skills and related working experiences should be the main concern (Marchante et al., 2011; National Associated of Manufactured, 2011; Rahmah et al., 2011). To support that, Ying (2013) complained, in Malaysia, the main reasons for graduate fails to get the job opportunities is due to the lacking of employability skills. To that point, the critical

function of possessing adequate employability skills, especially among Malaysian graduates, has been vital in the ever-changing workforce (Robinson & Garton, 2008). Thus, in order for graduates to secure for a professional position, they need to put an extra effort to acquire and enhance particular job specific skill and a range of soft skills within themselves.

1.2.3 Partnering Industry and Education for Curricular Enhancement

As the industry keeps expanding with continual demand from extensive stakeholders for examples universities, students, employers, and educators, program curricula became the focal point to achieve the desired outcomes that are seen to be useful for the development of graduates employability (Casado, 2003; Jafari & Ritchie, 1981; Lefever & Withiam, 1998; Pavesic, 1984, 1993; Tribe 2002; Umbreit, 1992). Currently, the issue of graduates' employability has been a growing concern in many countries, including Malaysia. A common belief in the industry is that HLIs are taking the responsibility to ensure graduates well-equipped with the relevant skills in order to have a placement in the job market (Robinson & Garton, 2008).

1.3 Problem Statement

Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) once again steal the spotlight in the issue of supplying inadequate quality manpower to contribute to the industrial evolution (Kamaghe & Juliana, 2020). According to Nor Zahidi Alias, the chief economist at Malaysian Rating Corp Bhd in FMT News (2017), the statistics show an increasing number of unemployed Malaysian fresh graduates even though the labor market fundamentals remaining reputable. He added, employers nowadays facing substantial burdens despite graduates' lack of on-site working experience as many companies prioritize on it from employees. Unfortunately, in Malaysia, many students often fail in realizing the importance of possessing real-world experience by giving concentration on scoring good grades in academics only (Phang et al., 2014; Sawani et al., 2016; Shariff et al., 1992; Tanius & Alam, 2014).

In regards to the issues of graduates' lack of hands-on experiences demanded by employers, HLIs make a great effort to develop internship programs that enable to polish their students with the necessary skills demanded by the industry. By having effective internship programs, students are able to develop professional skills, learning experiences, and obtain a better understanding of the industry requirements (Jake et al., 2020). Yet, negative internship experience can make a student stay away in the particular industry. In fact, several studies supported bad internship experiences have impact on the students' intention to sustain specifically in the hospitality industry (Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Callan, 1997; Richardson, 2008; West & Jameson, 1990; and Zopiatis, 2007). Christopher et al. (2020) highlighted many hospitality students, which through their working experience, have become considerably less interested in selecting hospitality as their first career choice. As a result, many graduates from hospitality management leave the industry due to the unfulfilled expectations (Madalyn et al., 2020).

3

Adjusting a curriculum and pedagogy allow the institutions to address the gap between classroom and practice in hospitality education. Academicians specifically are urge to assist students see connections between classroom knowledge and the realities of the working world. However, these in-class activities cannot provide a complete replication of the complexities involved in real-world problem analysis and solving. Here is where appropriate designed internships plays important role as they put students in action-learning situations which allow them to apply classroom theory and knowledge to practice (Asirifi et al., 2013).

Thus, in order to ensure hospitality graduates are ready to kick-start their first permanent career in the industry, perhaps both HLIs and industry should work together closely to develop a well-structured internship program in order to meet stakeholder's expectations (Arif et al., 2020). Although several studies emphasized on the effects of students' internship experiences towards their career intention, there is still a lack of empirical research that has been carried out on the effect between internship determinants, internship satisfaction, and self-perceived competence, particularly within the hospitality context.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is much more comprehensive through the broader coverage in different areas of internship satisfaction. This study intend to use findings from extensive literatures to determine the factors of internship satisfaction from interns' perspectives and experiences through three main factors, which is, job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors. The researcher emphasized that these three factors contribute to the overall satisfaction of undergraduates towards their internship experience.

In particular, the objective of this study is to identify the effect between internship determinants (job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors) with the internship satisfaction among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. Besides, this study aims to determine the effect of internship satisfaction and self-perceived competence among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. This study also aims to assess the most influential factors of internship satisfaction among job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors.

1.4 Research Objectives

In general, this study aimed to investigate the factors that contribute to the internship satisfaction and its influence on self-perceived competence among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. The specific objectives of this study are presented in the following:

a) To identify the effect between internship determinants (job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors) with the internship

4

satisfaction among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities.

b)   To determine the effect between internship satisfaction and self-perceived competence among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities.

c)   To assess the most influential factors of internship satisfaction among job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors.

1.5   Research Questions

a)   What are the effect between internship determinants (job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors) with the internship satisfaction among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities?

b)   What is the effect between internship satisfaction and self-perceived competence among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities?

c)   What are the most influential factors of internship satisfaction among job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors?

1.6   Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the primary significance of this current study is, it provides broader coverage in different natures (i.e. business, education, sport management, and computer science) focused on the factors of internship satisfaction that comprise of job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors. The study also focused on the extending knowledge of internship outcomes by connecting internship satisfaction with self-perceived competence to ensure that students are notice of their strengths and weaknesses after completing their internship practices which is crucial for future challenges and successful career development. Besides, the target population of this study is determined to be one of the uniqueness as it involves variation respondents which come from eight public universities in Malaysia.

Practically, this study will be significant to the host companies of hospitality internships as they can execute the nature of this current study to test whether the factors that affect to the student satisfactions are actually present in the variables of job characteristics, organizational environment, and contextual factors that they offered to interns. The expected outcomes of this study also seen as a platform for companies to attract, recruit and retain stand out practical workers to convert to permanent employees in the future. Hence, the more significant concern will be taken by the company and also institutions to improve their delivery process of a satisfactory learning experience for interns through the identification of the factors that are shown to be effective.

5

Taking into consideration the competencies required by the industry which has been implied in the survey of this study, the educational institutions should consider redesigning the curriculum structure and internship program as a platform for preparing graduates with the most important competencies as proposed by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The perceptions of students on the self-assessment of competencies are an important indicator of the successful internship outcomes that may provide valuable information for the improvement of curriculum. Thus, industry is seen as a great mutual collaborator for preparing the idea of redeveloping effective hospitality curriculum. As a result, the educational institutions would receive advantage in producing graduates who are work-ready, well-equipped and able to survive the future challenges within the industry.

1.7   Chapter Layout

There are five chapters involved in this thesis which explain the details of every chapter below:

Chapter One is the introduction of the thesis which emphasized more on the research background, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, and the significance of this study.

Chapter Two evolves the literature review consists of extensive literature from previous studies that were reviewed clearly and understandably in the context of job characteristics, organizational environment, contextual factors, internship satisfaction and self-perceived competence. Also, the relevant theoretical, conceptual and proposed framework could be found presented in the same chapter.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology, which includes the research design, sample selection, data collection, questionnaire design, data processing and data analysis.

Chapter Four discusses the obtained findings of the measurement model and structural model results analysis.

Chapter Five covers an overview of the major findings of this study. This chapter also presents the contribution of this study, limitations, as well as recommendations for future research.

1.8   Definition of Major Terms

The following terms are operationally defined as they utilize to this study:

Competence- refers to the one who acquire skills and abilities to do something successfully (Kleeman, 2011).

Competency- Refers to the specification and application of activities and skills to the standard of performance required (Tas, 1988).

Curriculum- Referred to the subjects or courses the students have to enroll in regards to the need of the academic fulfillment in a college (Stark and Luttaca, 1996).

Curriculum requirements- The number of academic credits students must complete as a pre-requisite for graduation (Simmons, 2006).

Employability- Brown, Hesketh, and Williams (2003) defined employability as the skills and abilities that allow a person acquiring and maintaining employment.

Employability skills- Defined as a set of transferable skills that are highly valued by employers for effective performance in the workplace (Conference Board of Canada, 2000).

Experiential Learning- Experiential learning is a collaboration among stakeholders for examples students, educational institutions, and the industries in respect to promotes the students career professional development (Dyer & Schumann, 1993).

Internship- A transitional platform for students to apply from classroom learning to hands-on practices (Simmons, 2006).

Job Characteristics- Consist of variables that defined the job areas that have to be done by employees during at workplace (D'Abate et al., 2009).

Organizational Environment- Referred to the surrounding location of the workplace that affect performance, operations, and resources of the organization (Daft, 1997).

Contextual Factors- Factors that defined personal, cultural, social, and economic that influence health, safety, and well-being of a person in physical activity (National Science Foundation, 2005).

1.9   Conclusion

Generally, the primary objective of this current study is to investigate the factors contribute to the internship satisfaction and its influence on self-perceived competence among hospitality undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. This chapter has brought a general understanding on the common ground of issues arise on the supply and demand between HLIs and industry in producing well-prepared graduates in terms

of incorporating internship as part of program curricula, soft skills demanded by industry, graduates' working experiences, and also student's satisfaction towards internship program. Thus, it is shown from relevant literature discussed that the internship is one of the main variables that should be studied to identify the relevant factors that contribute to the internship satisfaction and to determine the relationship between satisfaction with internship experience and self-perceived competence.

8

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77

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