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Employment Perception among Undergraduate Students in The Hospitality Industry

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Abstract: The growth of the industry and the growing competition, this indicates that the industry is thriving. Therefore, Malaysia needs more skilled labor to meet the needs of the industry. The public and private sectors need to continue to play a role in providing hospitality as they are believed to have the potential to produce graduates who are ready to be absorbed by the industry. There are too many issues related to hospitality industry jobs, so graduates need to be well prepared in terms of knowledge, skills and experience. In addition, students need to constantly think about the factors that influence them to work in the hospitality industry. The purpose of this study was to study the students' perception of the catering program, Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education (FPTV), UTHM on employment in the field of hospitality upon completion of bachelor's degree. The chosen methodology is to use quantitative data which is a survey study to answer the research question. Questionnaires are instruments used to obtain research data. The results of this study look at the perceptions of 78 students in catering programs and can help them identify industry needs for workers.

Keywords: Catering Program, Employment, Hospitality, Graduation

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

Graduates will need to be aware of the real-life situations, challenges and problems encountered while working in the hospitality industry. They need to measure their level of knowledge, skills and preparation

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as they learn and bring to the real world of work. Issues of job mismatch can have serious consequences, not just for the individual, but may result in unemployment (Wahidon, 2009). This work inequality means a situation of imbalance between the characteristics of an employee such as the type of education (knowledge), domain (field) or skills that do not fit the needs and roles of the workplace. Universities and industry need to play a role in understanding current educational and employment standards and requirements.

In addition, employers in Malaysia often criticize that Malaysian graduates are now lacking in generic work skills and self-confidence (Muhammad, 2016). Workers with low skills in higher education or lower education are not the focus of the industry. Employers expect more skills from their employees to compete in the workplace. According to Ismail (2012), the vacancies previously occupied by low-skilled workers were filled by high-skilled workers, thus low-skilled workers became unemployed. However, the unemployed can try to be more skilled and knowledgeable.

Furthermore, in relation to these issues, it is evident that the current generation is very different from the generation of the last 20 years that changed from the generations of X, Y, Z, millennials, and so on. Be aware that the age is constantly changing and different from generation to generation. Thus, the issue of generation Z is faced with the issue of knowledge enhancement and there is a discrepancy between the current knowledge and industry needs (Somers, 2019). As such, institutions need to innovate curriculum to enhance their career and professionalism, as well as expand their creative and innovative careers in various fields.

In addition, the problems faced by graduates and graduates can be seen in terms of the cost of living and financial costs in career selection (Wahidon, 2009). This is because the choice of career will be related to the cost of living including the choice of location of employment, accommodation, transportation, and future financial needs. Graduates need to plan from the beginning to make sure they choose the right path and avoid unsatisfactory job records and living expenses.

Furthermore, positive attitudes toward employment are a key consideration for graduates and future graduates (Wahidon, 2009). Positive feedback is better than negative starting with the submission of a graduate resume and then at the interview session. The impression we see is on how our graduates submit their resumes, which is based on the graduation and dedication of the graduates themselves.

In addition, the hospitality industry is associated with the issue of 'employee turnover' that is commonplace today (Burns, 2018). Some of the reasons for this hiring are workers' unhealthy behaviors, work and life imbalances, job shortages, poor ratings, poor guidance and feedback, poor decision making, and stress at work.

In addition, for hospitality graduates who have left the hospitality industry, the biggest difference between the career factors they perceive and perceive as important is their career with a good starting salary (Brown, Bosselman and Thomas, 2016). What is at stake now is that the starting salary for low-income hotel workers (Chahal, 2017) is something graduates think. However, the starting salary may vary depending on many different factors such as the position you hold, the experience gained, the working hours and so on.

Jobs in this area of hospitality are influenced by the push and pull factors. Too many issues are now a concern for graduates entering the workforce. Issues such as starting salary, industry requirements, insufficient graduation skills and experience, social issues and so on. When it comes to job applications, graduates think of many factors when choosing a job, such as the cost of living. A graduate need to consider the cost of living after getting a job, whether it is worthwhile and able to survive.

Graduates and graduates in the hospitality field need to think about many things before applying for the job. This is because the problems that arise will burden the graduates in the future. This study aims to emphasize to FPTV, UTHM's graduate catering program about the important things they need to consider before venturing into the field of hospitality. In addition, this study revealed all the statements and problems associated with the hospitality field as it ensured that students in the FPTV catering program were fully prepared before entering the workforce.

1.2 Objective

The objectives of this project are to:

- i. Identify Catering program students' level of knowledge in the field of Hospitality.
- ii. Identify the level of skills preparation of Catering program students for employment in the field of Hospitality.
- iii. Evaluate Catering program students of FPTV on factors affecting their commitment to work in the field of Hospitality after graduation.

1.3 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study was developed as a guide for the researcher to conduct the study and obtain the necessary information. This conceptual framework was developed to graphically describe the study. This conceptual framework has three components, which are independent variables, processes, and dependent variables. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework.

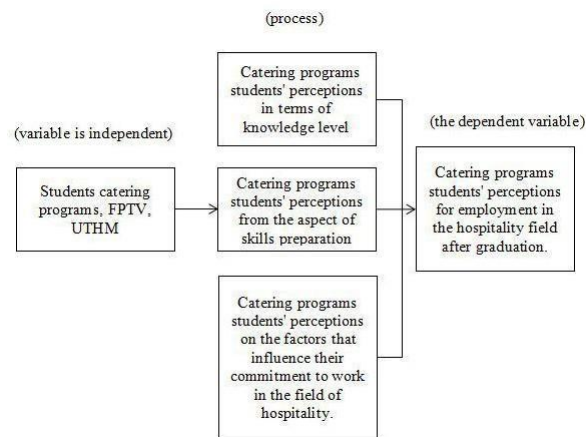


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

1.4 Literature review

Jaafar, Mohd Ramli and Hussin (2018) study the factors that influence students' perceptions of their careers in the field of hotel operations at the Bukit Beruang Community College. This study describes factors that influence students' perceptions of working in the hospitality industry such as working hours, low pay, tedious work and so on. The study of Jaafar, Mohd Ramli and Hussin (2018) can be attributed to this study in terms of factors that influence students to choose a career in hospitality. However, the factors identified in the study of Jaafar, Mohd Ramli and Hussin do not meet this study.

In addition, Karunamurthi and Sieng (2018) conducted a study on employment sector choice and factors influencing employment choice among University students. The research conducted by them is to

identify the sector that students are interested in and what factors motivate students to choose their career. In this study Karunamurthi and Sieng (2018) can relate to this research in terms of job selection based on factors that motivate students to choose.

Further, in a study journal Lau, Muhamad and Abdullah (2018) discussed career readiness among vocational and technical students and the factors contributing to their readiness. These findings indicate that the level of job readiness among vocational and technical students is moderate. Studies from Lau, Muhamad and Abdullah (2018) have little to do with the second objective of this study, the level of student preparation in career.

Researchers Kharen, Carlo, Loise, and Jake (2015) conducted a study entitled factors related to the marketability of new graduates in the hospitality industry. This study by Kharen, Carlo, Loise, and Jake (2015) is a research reference to shed light on the second objective of the study, which is to identify students' skills in the field of hospitality before entering the work environment.

2. Methodology

This study uses quantitative data as a survey to answer the research question. Questionnaires are instruments used to obtain research data. Table 1 shows the research design.

Table 1: Research design

Research design	Methods of collection	Respondents/ samples	Data types
Quantitative	Questionnaire	Student catering Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education	Likert Scale

The study population was cohort 8 and 9 students for catering programs on FPTV. The sampling method used by the researcher was randomly assigned to the population group. A total of 78 respondents were selected as students in the catering program with a division of 55 from cohort 8 and 23 students from cohort 9. This group of students was selected to determine students' perceptions of work in the hospitality field after completing their undergraduate studies based on the objectives and research questions.

3. Results and Discussion

The information in section A is the initial information of the respondents themselves. According to the analysis of demographic divisions found in this study, 64 people (82.1%) of the respondents were female students, while 14 (17.9%) were male students. This indicates that female students outnumber students in the final year catering program. Out of the 78 respondents surveyed, the highest respondents were 57 (73.1%) students of catering programs aged 22-24, while the remaining 21 students were 25 years and above with a 26.9% percentage. These findings indicate that students in this final year's catering program are between the ages of 22-24 who have recently completed their undergraduate studies.

Besides, 70.5% of these 78 students were from cohort 8, with a total of 55 students, while the rest were from cohort 9 of 23 (29.5%). This finding shows that student enrollment in cohort 8 cohorts is much higher than cohort enrollment in cohort 9. Students program catering for 8 and 9 cohort consisted of 97.4% of people are Malays, namely a total of 76 people. The other two students are of Indian origin (2.6%). It can be stated that on average, the Malays are interested in the field of catering and hospitality compared to other nations.

Finally, demographic survey data revealed that 54 students (69.2%) of students were from STPM

graduates and 23 students were from Diploma graduates with a percentage score (29.5%). There is one student in this cohort of 8 and 9 who is a graduate other than STPM and Diploma. Table 2 shows the response demographic information distribution.

Table 2: Response demographic information distribution

Categories		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	14	17.9
	Female	64	82.1
Ages	19-21	0	0
	22-24	57	73.1
	25 years and above	21	26.9
Cohort	Cohort 8	55	70.5
	Cohort 9	23	29.5
Nation	Malay	76	97.4
	India	2	2.6
	Chinese	0	0
	Others	0	0
	STPM	54	69.2
Graduate	Certificate	0	0
	Diploma	23	29.5
	Others	1	1.3

3.1 Student knowledge level of Catering program in the field of Hospitality

Based on the data obtained, students are more likely to agree that knowing their job as a cook is in the field of hospitality. Furthermore, the average student strongly agrees that they are aware of their job as a premier in the field of hospitality. In addition, the students admit that they are aware of the scope of employment as a receptionist. Table 3 shows the students' knowledge level of the Catering program.

Table 3: Students' knowledge level of Catering program in the field of Hospitality

No	Statement	Frequency/ Percentage (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	I know the elements like promotion and marketing are among the most important elements in the field of Hospitality	0	0	4	44	33	4.3718	0.58352
2	I know the scope of my duties and responsibilities as a housekeeping in the field of Hospitality	0	1	3	45	29	4.3077	0.60961
3	I know that event managers are one of the jobs in the field of Hospitality	0	1	0	50	27	4.3205	0.54638
4	I know the job as a waiter/waitress in the field of Hospitality	0	0	0	30	48	4.6154	0.48965
5	I know my job as a chef is in the field of Hospitality	0	0	0	29	49	4.6282	0.48641
6	I know the scope of receptionist in the field of Hospitality	0	0	1	34	43	4.5385	0.52699
7	I know my job as a bar server in the field of Hospitality	0	0	3	36	39	4.4615	0.57417

3.2 The level of preparation of the graduates will be prior to entering the hospitality industry

The highest percentage of strongly agreeable items (60.3%) was in question number 9, which I gained hands-on skills and experience through industry training. Furthermore, in order to enter the work environment, students need to have generic skills. Therefore, students agree that they have a high level of leadership, but some students say they strongly agree with the fact that they have good oral and written communication skills. There was 14.1% which was the highest disagreement in item 16 which stated that students were proficient in the use of information technology. Table 4 shows the level of preparation of the student of Catering program before entering the Hospitality industry.

Table 4: Level of preparation of student Catering program before entering the Hospitality industry

No	Statement	Frequency/ Percentage (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		1	2	3	4	5		
8	I gained hands-on skills and experience through hands-on learning	0	0	0	36	42	4.5385	0.50175
9	I gained hands-on skills and experience through industry training	0	0	0	31	47	4.6026	0.49254
10	I gained hands-on skills and experience through Hospitality programs / workshops	0	0	3	39	36	4.4231	0.57024
11	I gained hands-on skills and experience through part-time work related to Hospitality jobs	0	0	0	43	35	4.4487	0.50058
12	I have good oral and written communication skills	0	0	1	52	25	4.3077	0.49169
13	I'm good at solving problems while on duty	0	0	2	56	20	4.2308	0.48142
14	I have good teamwork skills while working in the organization	0	0	0	54	24	4.3077	0.48846
15	I have always instilled lifelong learning skills within myself	0	0	2	55	21	4.2436	0.28826
16	I'm good at using information technology	0	0	11	54	13	4.0256	0.55769
17	I have an entrepreneurial spirit in me	0	0	2	56	20	4.2308	0.48142
18	I have high leadership qualities	0	0	0	62	16	4.2051	0.40641
					79.5	20.5		

3.3 Factors Affecting Graduate Commitment Involving Jobs in the Field of Hospitality

i. Payment and Benefits

The findings of the research data indicate that the item of opportunity rose as one of the payment and interest factors which reached the percentage value that strongly agree with the other item amounting to 69.2%. This is followed by a working time factor of 65.4% approval by student catering programs. However, there are 2.6% of students who disagree with the factors of working time in the work environment. Furthermore, as seen in the table above, students are less likely to argue and view the starting salary as a factor in pay and benefits. Table 5 shows the payment and interest factors.

Table 5: Payment and interest factors

No	Statement	Frequency/ Percentage (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		1	2	3	4	5		
19	Starting wage	0	1	2	28	47	4.5513	0.61681
			1.3	2.6	35.9	60.3		
20	Opportunity to rise	0	0	2	22	54	4.6667	0.52636
				2.6	28.2	69.2		
21	Salary by education level	0	1	6	22	49	4.5256	0.69739
			1.3	7.7	28.2	62.8		
22	Additional benefits	0	1	2	36	49	4.5769	0.61410
			1.3	2.6	33.3	62.8		
23	Working hours	0	2	5	20	51	4.5385	0.73312
			2.6	6.4	25.6	65.4		

ii. Nature of Work

Table 6 explains that items of low stress are a nature of work that is of concern to students and 55.1% strongly agree with students. But this factor also found 1.3% strongly disagree and disagree with students. Further, it can be seen that students are less likely to agree with off-the-job items as a nature of work. However, 42 students strongly agree that conducive facilities for employees are a factor of nature of work that needs to be emphasized. Table 6 shows the nature of work.

Table 6: Nature of work

No	Statement	Frequency/ Percentage (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		1	2	3	4	5		
24	Work outside the field	0	1	11	32	34	4.2692	0.75029
			1.3	14.1	41.0	43.6		
25	The job is challenging	0	0	2	37	39	4.4744	0.55184
				2.6	47.4	50.0		
26	Less work pressure	1	1	5	28	43	4.4231	0.78159
		1.3	1.3	6.4	35.9	55.1		
27	Close to public facilities	0	0	5	34	39	4.4359	0.61559
				6.4	43.6	50.0		
28	Convenient facilities for employee	0	0	4	32	42	4.4872	0.59747
				5.1	41.0	53.8		

iii. Social status

Item 32, healthy labor competition, had the highest number of consents with a 66.7% percentage. Furthermore, students also strongly agree that communication between staff is one of the social status factors that should be considered in the selection of jobs with a total of 50 students agreeing. Referring to the table above, two items received the same percentage of disagreement: staff engagement and parent expectations of 1.3%. However, a total of 19 students recorded the highest number of disagreements with the parents. Table 7 shows the social status.

Table 7: Social status

No	Statement	Frequency/ Percentage (%)					Mean	Standard Deviation
		1	2	3	4	5		
29	Interaction between staff	0	1 1.3	0	30 38.5	47 60.3	4.5769	0.57024
30	Communication between staff	0	0	1 1.3	27 34.6	50 64.1	4.6282	0.51242
31	Parent’s will	0	1 1.3	19 24.4	25 32.1	33 42.3	4.1538	0.83863
32	Healthy labor competition	0	0	1 1.3	25 32.1	52 66.7	4.6538	0.50522

3.4 Suggestions

- i. In the future, it is advisable to extend the scope of the study to a larger number of samples. This study focuses only on final year catering students.
- ii. Future research is also expected to involve third-year students to determine their readiness for industrial training in the field of hospitality further into the workforce.
- iii. Future studies are proposed to focus on factors that influence students' involvement in the broader field of hospitality or simply focus on that topic for future studies as there are many other factors that students may consider

4. Conclusion

After conducting research and analyzing the data, it was found that catering students had a very good perception of their work in the field of Hospitality. These students' positive perceptions have shown that they are ready to venture into the field of hospitality, because of the positive results from the students on their level of knowledge and skill level. However, there are still students who are less aware of the next step to work after graduation. These students have low levels of knowledge and skills, and do not consider the factors that influence them in their job selection. It may be that these students have other plans after graduation such as continuing their studies or other pursuits.

The whole study is aimed at ensuring that students in the final year catering program are well prepared in the knowledge and skills to get into the real job after graduation. The results of this study have shown that students have used their study time well. The cultural and economic changes taking place in this country require long and broad- minded graduates before choosing a career. This is because the competition for employment is fierce, given the average graduates in the hospitality field. In addition, there are also hospitality graduates who have moved to other areas due to intense competition and job opportunities.

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