

TVET STUDENTS AND INTENTION TO CAREER IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY: THE PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS

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ABSTRACT. As industries always facing the issue of missing the gap between what the industry needs and what is not being taught at the college, meanwhile Technical Vocational Education and Training or TVET play as a tool for productivity enhancement and preparing individuals with specific skill for specific jobs including the hospitality and tourism industry. This preliminary study looks at the perception of Polytechnics TVET students on working environment, mentoring, staff turnover, technology application and intention to career in the hospitality and tourism industry. Using a quantitative approach, three hundred twenty-two usable questionnaires were successfully collected and analyzed using the descriptive statistic. Although at the stage of industrial training, TVET students are quite embracing with the overall working environment in the industry. The industry mentor not only shaping but strengthen their perception and interest in the hospitality and tourism industry. TVET students also adored on technology in the workplace and witnessed the employee turnover. Despite without a solid decision, TVET students having the intention to career in the hospitality and tourism industry after graduation. The promising indication drawn several implications for the TVET students, polytechnics, hospitality, and tourism industry.

KEYWORDS: TVET; Polytechnic students; working environment; mentoring; staff turnover; technology application

1 INTRODUCTION

The Technical Vocational Education and Training or TVET has been introduced as a tool for productivity enhancement and preparing individuals with specific skill sets for specific jobs. Countries throughout the world implementing TVET to different levels of individuals for the economy, industry, organisations, and society development. TVET is looked as key economic function in up-skilling, integrating young peoples with high quality technical skills into the labour market (Herlandy, 2019; Prunuske et al., 2019). Ridzwan et al. (2017); Qizi, (2020) contended that in line with technological advancement, the global labour market is really in the need of high skill individuals with the specific training before entering the workforce. Prunuske et al., (2019) posited TVET is a development mechanism for less academic achievement individuals to acquire a psychomotor skill in a specific trade. Following that, a wide range of TVET programs like engineering, automotive, computer and technology, electronic, commerce, including the hospitality and tourism are offered.

Due to its advantages, many school-leavers choose TVET education as a career platform to grow and secure their future job opportunities. Besides other fields, there is an increasing awakening concern of Malaysian government on the importance of giving skill and knowledge in the tourism and hospitality through TVET (MoHE, 2017). The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has executed the TVET skill-based programs in tourism and hospitality through various higher institutions covering the certificates, diplomas and even degree levels. Polytechnics, and Community colleges as well as other colleges either public or private in addition to other programs are used as platforms to uplift the tourism and hospitality

TVET programs. Not to belittle that the conventional hospitality program involved less industry exposure compared to TVET which much more emphasized on industry skill driven. In the conventional hospitality and tourism program, students are required to undergo at least four to six months of industrial training, whereas in TVET program, students be in the industry for at least twelve months (MQA, 2019). In relation to this notion and in the context of this study, during the industrial internship, TVET students are undoubtedly gone through various experiences and observed few things such as working environment, mentoring, employee turnover and technology application. These attributes are assumed to influence students' subsequent intention to a career in hospitality and tourism industry.

Based on the literature, many available studies in the hospitality and tourism have focused on graduates career expectations (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Cho et al., 2006; Walsh and Taylor, 2007), the hospitality graduates job retention and attrition (Dieke et al., 2020; Snell & Hart, 2008), graduates job hopping (Zahari et al., 2010; Yuen, 2016), graduates turnover (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010; Brown et al., 2015;) and job mobility and poor transfer of fresh graduates into the hospitality and tourism industry (Zahari et al., 2010). On TVET, although the increasing number of studies concentrating in providing student with an industry skill-driven, there is still relatively little research on TVET student attitude and perception toward intention to career in hospitality and tourism industry and the factors that cause the causations. Thus, in understanding, filling the gap and in line with the addressing issues, this study aims to reveal TVET students' attitude and perception on working environment, mentoring, employee turnover, technology application and intention to career in hospitality and tourism industry after undergone the internship program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Industrial training in hospitality and tourism industry

In the context of hospitality and tourism programs, industrial training is one of the important elements and considered as a pre-requisite to complete certificates, diploma and degree programs (Anjum 2020; Azmi et al., 2019). Ayub et al., (2017); Jamil et al., (2013) stated that industrial training will give students the opportunity to apply what they have learnt in the program to the actual work environment. During those periods, students experienced the working environment, mentoring, technology application and observed the employee turnover. The work environment relates to the surrounding working conditions in which an employee performs their job tasks. This is associated with physical, psychological, and social (Agbozo et al., 2017; Rosyidi, 2020; Zahari et al., 2010). Physical is dealing with basic human needs such as safety, comfort, tangible working condition, hygiene, and accessibility (Vischer, 2008). The psychological work environment is associated with those elements of the workplace which are pertinent to workers conduct like emotions, mood, psychological symptoms, affective disorders and cognitions (Agbozo et al., 2017).

Mentoring is beneficial in several ways and has reciprocal benefits for all involved, including mentors, mentees, and it has been proven as one of the successful mechanisms to enhance the organization's achievement (Rekha, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2019). As stated by Eickholt, (2018); Haran and Jeyaraj (2019); Ismail et al., (2021); Uen et al., (2018), mentoring involves a process in which a superior or senior employee helps a less experienced employee in adapting to an organization's culture, performing tasks better, or developing a better career trajectory, acting as mirrors, reflecting the organization's values and attitudes, and sometimes become a role model to others. Turnover on the other hand, is one of the most crucial issues for hospitality and tourism industry and it is alarming and staggering (Cicerale, 2020; Said et al., 2020). The issue of employee turnover in the hospitality industry is a global phenomenon whereby it is happening especially in developed, developing countries and Malaysian hospitality industry without an exception (Haldorai et. al. 2019). Social status, pay and benefit, and work nature are few factors that lead to the higher employee turnover (Bello and Bello, 2021; Mannaa and Abou-Shouk, 2020). Employee turnover hugely harmed and impacts on the overall company productivity and organization performances, service or product quality, cost operation and training and human capital (Dwesini, 2019; Lee et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2017).

Technology nowadays has dramatically transformed hospitality and tourism industry activities. The vast usage of technology in hospitality and tourism undeniably creates a perception in making a career decision whether to stay or leave the industry especially for the new generation (Arana et al., 2015; Solnet

et al., 2015; Ferdian et al., 2021). Barron et al., (2007); Brown et al., (2015); Fok and Yeung, (2016); Lub et al., (2012) posited that new generations specifically the Millennials' or generation Z have a different perception toward hospitality and tourism industry compared with previous generations. Meanwhile, intention to career clearly associated with an individual's attitude towards specific profession or vocation (Blau, 1985; Chang, 1999). This vocation represents one passion and motivation in performing their job. Shim and Rohrbaugh (2011) deduced intention to career comprises of individual attitudes, career identification, job involvement, and career planning. All these elements can secure an individual career when the commitment becomes an important indicator of occupational meaning (Aryee & Tan, 1992). Poon (2004) strongly noted that individuals who understanding career should be able to better evaluate their work qualifications and interests, establish suitable career goals, develop realistic career plans and obtain the development experiences needed to benefit from career opportunities.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature as it is aimed to describe the distribution of one or more variables, without regard to any causal or other hypothesis. A quantitative approach through a cross-sectional study with a self-reported and self-administered survey questionnaire is applied for information gathering. The hospitality and tourism TVET students from 9 Polytechnics in Malaysia who had undergone the internship program as the unit of analysis and sample of the study. The survey instrument consists of three sections in which Section A solicits respondent demographic profiles. Section B measures the independent attributes comprised of working environment, mentoring, employee turnover and technology application while Section C measures intention to career. Most items were adapted from Zahari,(2004); Ferdian, (2021); Kuslivan (2000) and Ammissah (2020) with minor modifications of wording to address the specific needs of the study. Respondents are required to respond their view on a seven -type Likert scale ranging from 1 with "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree. The Malay language version of the survey questionnaire is also used after direct translation from the English version by the language expert. A pilot study was conducted to verify the reliability and validity of the items used before a final version of the questionnaire is confirmed. The coefficient value above 0.70 produced in all dimensions in section B and C which indicate the high internal consistency (Bagozzi and Yi 1988)

The coordinators of Industrial Relations and Training Unit in each polytechnic are contacted for their cooperation in providing information of students who had undergone the industrial internship. Due to geographical dispersion in which students are located across the nation, it slightly be difficult for researchers to reach every one of them through face to face administer questionnaires, thus the online method through Google Form survey is also utilized. The respondents are briefed on the aim of the study and the purpose of the survey conducted and informed that the information provided would be kept strictly confidential and no single respondent involved would be identified through the information sheet. A total of 322 responses were successfully collected.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile and Descriptive statistic

Based on frequency, 41.3% (n=133) of respondents are males compared to 58.7% (n=189) females. The age group of 20 to 21 years old accounted 23.6% (n=76), 22 to 23 years old with 69.3% (n=223) and 24 to 25 years old with 7.1% (n=23). The subsequent section presented descriptive statistics on items related to the working environment, mentoring, employee turnover and technology application as well as intention to career in hospitality and tourism industry.

4.2 Working Environment

The magnitude of the mean scores ranging from 4.10 to 6.58 indicates that TVET students neither agree to strongly agree on the ten items used measuring the working environment. They placed neither agree nor disagree that working hours in hospitality within their expectation (BWE1 = 4.10). They slightly agree that the workload and salary in hospitality and tourism is worthwhile (BWE8= 4.50), well understood that the working environment fluctuated (BWE3 = 4.94), others being helped through their work (BWE9= 4.91). Despite these, TVET students agree that hospitality and tourism industry provide pleasant working surroundings (BWE10= 5.57), offer a reasonable incentive for workers (BWE5= 6.04), do not mind working

extra time for their future benefit (BWE2= 6.22), pleasant to work with colleagues (BWE7= 6.39), good physical working conditions (BWE6= 6.44) and felt that, hospitality and tourism is exciting and challenging industry (BWE4= 6.58). What could be said of the findings is that although TVET students in the stage of industrial training, they understood about the nature of the industry and are quite embraced with the overall working environment in this industry. The result corroborated well with Ferdian et al., (2021) and Meirina et al., (2018) that working environment is one of the elements that influence graduates to stay or leave the industry.

4.3 Mentoring

The magnitude of the mean scores ranging from 5.53 to 6.56 denoted respondents agree and strongly agree on certain items in this section. As such, respondents agreed that they cannot excel in the hospitality and tourism industry without looking at other's (BMRM5 = 5.531), envy people who has become successful in hospitality and tourism career (BMRM9 = 5.913), that they have obtained the useful information on hospitality and tourism career thru industry mentor (BMRM = 6.012), industry mentor given clear picture about hospitality and tourism industry (BMRM = 6.087), mentoring develop their vocational skills in hospitality and tourism industry (BMRM = 6.133), industry mentor shaping their interest in hospitality and tourism industry (BMRM1 = 6.276). However, respondents strongly agree industry mentor changing their perceptions toward hospitality and tourism industry (BMRM 2 = 6.537), the success of staff in hospitality and tourism industry inspires them emulate their success (BMRM 4 = 6.559). This section finding clearly indicates that industry mentor or role model has shaping or strengthen the TVET students' perception and interest in the hospitality and tourism industry during their internship. This is consistent with Jackson et al., (2019); Morgenroth et al., (2015); Nabi et al., (2019) in that mentoring can motivate and inspire an individual to visualise the actual job experience and share valuable information about the job's rules.

4.4 Employee Turnover

The magnitude of the mean scores of the nine items measuring the staff turnover ranging from 5.17 to 6.22 denoted that TVET students basically agree on the items. They agree that heavy and harder workload makes employees leave the industry (BST2= 5.57), some employees, make the hospitality and tourism industry as a steppingstone (BST4 = 5.58). With those feelings, they understood hospitality and tourism industry have frequent employee turnover ratio (BST1= 5.63), work are stress and pressured (BST5= 5.68), thus agree will leave the industry if they find a better job (BST8= 5.83), believed another industries offer better promotional opportunity than hospitality and tourism (BST7= 5.95), and that they don't really mind which industry they work, as long as the job is interesting (BST9= 6.14), or that they will take a job in another industry (BST6= 6.21) and employees are actively look for a new job (BST3= 6.22). The feeling of the respondents clearly strengthens the notion that employee turnover rate in hospitality and tourism, particularly hotel sector is high compared to other industries. The high rate of employee turnover in the hospitality and tourism industry could be numerous ranging from social status, pay and benefit to nature of work that led to the higher employee turnover (Butijer, 2020; Richardson and Butler, 2012).

4.5 Technology Application

The magnitude of the mean scores ranging from 5.62 to 5.93 indicate that TVET students agreed on the items probed. They agreed that they feel embarrassed when they could not complete the task that using technology (BTA4= 5.62), feel upset when less technology applied at the workplace (BTA6= 5.68), experience of using technology in the workplace is valuable for them (BTA7=5.689), able to apply technology knowledge with the immediate situation (BTA8= 5.69). They also agreed that they have to constantly update their technological skill (BTA5=5.72), have given exposure with the latest technology during internship (BTA3=5.75), enjoy working in situation that using technologies (BTA1= 5.83) and technologies make their work faster, efficient and time saving (BTA2= 5.93). The above finding clearly denoted that TVET students embraced technology use at the workplace and felt it will make their work more efficient, faster, and unjoyful. In contrast, feel less motivated when technological knowledge is not

applied in completing their task. This is consistent with and supports the idea that new generations have a different perception of the hospitality and tourism industry than previous generations because they expect to work with technology (Barron et al., 2007; Brown et al., 2015; Fok and Yeung, 2016; Lub et al., 2012).

4.6 Intention to career

The magnitude of the mean scores ranging from 4.96 to 5.50 indicates that TVET students slightly agreed with the items probed. They slightly agree that they expect to work in the hospitality industry most of their working life (ITC10=4.96), will accept almost any job to stay in the hospitality industry (ITC8= 5.01), believe this industry will give a reasonable reward and benefit (ITC7= 5.19), expect to get ahead and built quicker in this industry (ITC9 = 5.24), will work in this industry if it offers flexibility working (ITC11=5.24). They also slightly agree that will definitely take job in this industry if technology is widely used (ITC4= 5.29), wish to contribute their knowledge and skill by giving back to this industry (ITC5= 5.35), could manage their work life balance by working in this industry (ITC6=5.42), this industry gives them better social status and improve their work-life balance (ITC3=5.39), tend to choose work in hospitality and tourism industry after finishing their study (ITC1= 5.49), will take hospitality and tourism career as a temporary expedient (ITC2=5.50). The finding revealed that TVET students although not yet having a solid decision but having intention to career in the hospitality and tourism industry after graduation. Result slightly contradict with Zahari et. al (2010); Jenkins (2010); Mohammed, (2018) and Richardson (2009) that intention to career in the industry are decline among hospitality and tourism student after the internship program.

5. CONCLUSION

Although this is a preliminary study, the findings provide some insights that TVET students understood on the nature of work thus, quite embraced with the overall working environment in hospitality and tourism industry despite portraying the uncertain feeling with the industry working hours. TVET students well witnessed that hospitality and tourism industry have high employee turnover ratio due to heavy and harder workload, work pressured and few other reasons. This strengthens the previous studies finding that employee turnover rate in hospitality and tourism, hotel sector in particular is a prominent issue compared to other industries. As a Z generation, TVET students perceive technology is closed to their heart, hence, becoming part of their working life as the application of will make work more efficient and faster. Out of these, the positive intention to career in the hospitality and tourism industry among the TVET students is probably the most remarkable findings in this study and undoubtedly merits serious attention. There is clear evidence that the industry would enable to capitalise on the skilled and qualified of young TVET graduates if the long stigma of passive acceptance and poor employment reputation of the industry could be eased. In this sense, TVET graduates hopefully would be sought by the industry to close the loop or vacuum on the shortage of manpower in the hospitality and tourism industry. This will be more viable if the industry re-evaluates and taking more proactive action on employee turnover and work pressured issues. With that, a strong relationship between the industry and polytechnic and community colleges should continually be fostered to ensure the educators are maximising the benefits to both students and industry from TVET educational process. Polytechnic educators also should encourage the positive aspirations held by TVET students by engendering more realistic perceptions of the industry to at least moderate the potential levels of cognitive dissonance. Maintaining stronger industry and education links by such means will provide some assistance in the development of young peoples with high quality technical skills into the labour market that could reduce the retention rates among hospitality and tourism management graduates. Finally, fostering a strong relationship between the government as policy makers, institutions as educational providers and industry as recipients will surely maximize the benefits from the TVET educational process to the hospitality and tourism industry development and nation economy.

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