

Challenges For Student Satisfaction Of Internship Program In Hospitality And Tourism Industry In Gurugram, Haryana- A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality and tourism industry in Gurugram, Haryana, is rapidly growing, providing numerous opportunities for students pursuing related degrees. Internships play a crucial role in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This exploratory study is to investigate the challenges that bachelor students of Hospitality and Tourism Management (Hotel and Tourism) often experience and need to overcome themselves through internship programs at enterprises in hotel, restaurant, travel, and tourism settings in Gurugram, Haryana. Data from 400 valid answers out of 442 respondents who have experienced their internship programs to identify the industry-specific difficulties that trainees must overcome in order to attain satisfaction with the internship term. The results show the main challenges are communication and conduct, working hours, problem-solving skills, self-confidence, supervision, and working environment but physical requirements. The conclusions help not only future student interns for better preparation but also indicate the Hospitality and Tourism Training Schools and industry enterprises the preparedness for students in psychology and skills to experience the most satisfactory and fruitful internship, which plays essential role in attracting talents to remain in Hotel and Tourism industry and mark the effectiveness of university training program. However, ensuring student satisfaction with these internship programs presents several challenges. This study aims to identify and analyze the key factors influencing student satisfaction with internship programs in the hospitality and tourism sector in Gurugram. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews with students, industry professionals, and academic coordinators, the research explores issues such as the alignment of academic curriculum with industry requirements, quality of mentorship, work environment, compensation, and career development opportunities. Preliminary findings suggest that mismatched expectations, inadequate support from mentors, and limited opportunities for skill application are significant deterrents to student satisfaction. The study concludes with recommendations for educational institutions and industry partners to enhance the internship experience, thereby improving overall student satisfaction and better preparing students for successful careers in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Keywords: Challenge; internship; hotel and tourism; hospitality student; satisfaction

Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry in Gurugram, Haryana, has emerged as a significant contributor to the region's economic growth, driven by its strategic location and robust infrastructure. As the industry expands, the demand for skilled professionals has intensified, prompting educational institutions to emphasize practical

training through internship programs. These internships serve as a critical component of students' educational journeys, providing them with hands-on experience and exposure to real-world industry dynamics.

Despite the essential role internships play in shaping future professionals, student satisfaction with these programs often varies, influenced by a myriad of factors. High levels of satisfaction are crucial as they impact students' learning outcomes, career readiness, and overall perception of the industry. Conversely, dissatisfaction can lead to disengagement, reduced motivation, and a potential mismatch between academic preparation and industry expectations.

This study seeks to investigate the challenges affecting student satisfaction with internship programs in the hospitality and tourism sector in Gurugram. By identifying and analyzing these challenges, the research aims to provide insights into areas requiring improvement, ultimately enhancing the internship experience for students and fostering a more robust linkage between academic institutions and the industry.

The specific objectives of this study include:

1. Identifying Key Factors: To determine the primary factors influencing student satisfaction with internship programs.
2. Evaluating Academic and Industry Alignment: To assess how well the academic curriculum aligns with industry requirements and expectations.
3. Analyzing Mentorship Quality: To examine the role of mentorship and its impact on student learning and satisfaction.
4. Assessing Work Environment: To explore the influence of the work environment, including organizational culture and interpersonal relationships, on student satisfaction.
5. Understanding Compensation and Benefits: To investigate how compensation, benefits, and other incentives affect students' perceptions and satisfaction.
6. Exploring Career Development Opportunities: To understand the extent to which internships contribute to students' career growth and professional development.

Through a combination of surveys, interviews, case studies, and Questionnaire, this research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of internship programs in Gurugram's hospitality and tourism industry. The findings will offer valuable recommendations for educational institutions and industry stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness and satisfaction levels of these internship programs, thereby contributing to the development of a skilled and motivated workforce ready to meet the industry's future challenges. Thus, this study aims to explore the impacts of difficulties in practices on hospitality and tourism student internship and to answer two research questions to fill the research gaps above:

RQ1: Are there any effects of individual and organizational challenges on internship satisfaction in hospitality and tourism enterprises?

RQ2: To what extent does internship satisfaction affect the student career perception, academic support, and enterprise support?

The result of challenges which students should overcome to get satisfaction will also help to improve student career perception, the effectiveness of university training programs, and will also maintain talents for this demanding hospitality industry. This study, though, will not detect all the determinants to bring satisfaction to students to avoid subjective expectations out of the ability reach of each student, it is rather to help students realize challenges that they themselves need to prepare and overcome.

Literature review

A proposed model and its research hypotheses To pursue a quality tourism internship program, relevant partners must always ask the following questions:

1. How is the overall evaluation of students on internship satisfaction?
2. What are the students' career perceptions after the internship?
3. What have been the individual challenges that the students themselves have overcome during their internship to reach a satisfactory result?
4. What are the organizational challenges?
5. What are students' expectations from the academy and enterprise support?

Although a number of studies in the literature emphasize student internship experiences, there are not many focusing on internship in the Gurugram, Haryana context.

The objectives of the study were two fold:

firstly, to investigate the challenges that the students must overcome during their internships; secondly, to identify according to students' expectations what support the school and the business can render to help them gain an internship satisfaction. The current research proposes and tests a conceptual model of the challenges influencing hospitality interns' satisfaction in Gurugram, Haryana. The proposed model was drawn

and developed from previous literature i.e., (Chen & Shen, 2012), (Lam & Ching, 2007), & (Hussien & Lopa, 2018). The proposed model includes ten constructs that are individual challenges (04 independent variables); organizational challenges (03 independent variables); student internship satisfaction; student career perceptions; academic support; and enterprise support. With the focus only on challenges that students need to take efforts from their sides instead of expecting from other stakeholders, and the research is on challenges not on student expectations we leave the expectation on pay, commute, and job characteristics (Hussien & Lopa, 2018) out of the scaling of this research. The proposed conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1. The following sections explain each factor and its relationship with interns' satisfaction.

Challenges for student satisfaction of internship program in Hotel And Tourism Industry in gurugram, Haryana

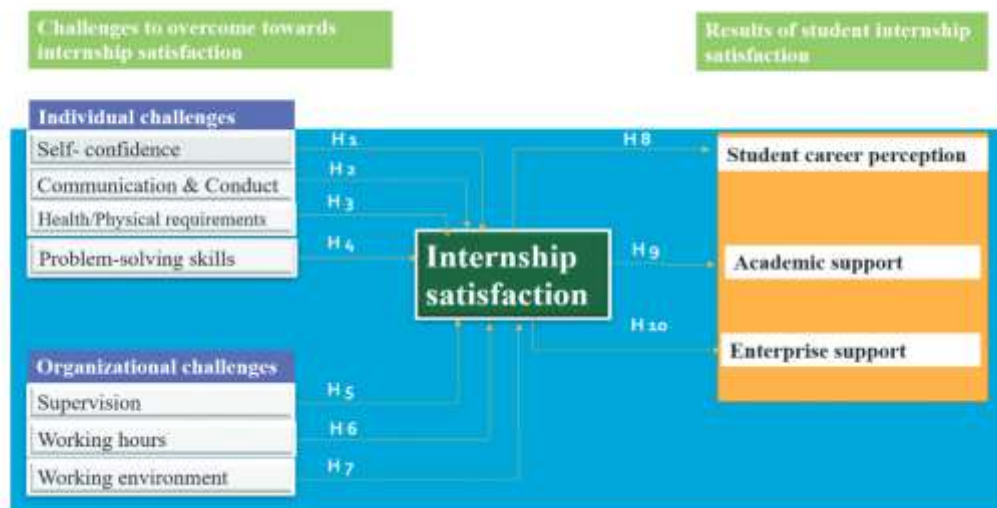


Figure 1. Conceptual model of student satisfaction.

Background of internship and its roles in tourism education

Various findings have been obtained in some studies conducted in the literature about the internship and its important roles in tourism education (Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Collins, 2002; Walo, 2001; Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013). According to Sir E.M Statler (1863–1928), the father of the American hotel, who emphasized the need for hospitality students to experience the demands of management in the real world via a “hands-on” learning experience (Cited from Zopiatis, 2007). The internship then is defined in some meanings such as work placements, industry work experience, practicum, work integrated education. Davies (1990) states that internship is a kind of experiential learning where students take the opportunity to apply learned theories from schools in real-world situations, and it provides an opportunity for students to integrate and consolidate thinking and action. Mc Mahon and Quinn (1995) called internship a ‘supervised work experience’ and that students are under special guidelines and attention during their internship instead of working alone by themselves in the industry. It is also considered as an opportunity to close the gap between university-learned theory and practical reality, or different perception from student-educator-employer (Yiu & Law, 2012). According to (Walo, 2001), internships constitute an important path to increase students’ learning capacities by providing them an efficient way of learning through active participation in various ways such as seeing, hearing, and doing (Walo, 2001). Furthermore, the internship is to give students the opportunities to put their knowledge into practice and to provide them some real experience in the job market. As one of the key roles of tourism education is integrating action-oriented learning into the theoretical program, a certain length of an internship period requires to be placed in the tourism curriculum. To sum it up, internship could be included a three-way partnership between students, institution of education, and the enterprise which accepts the interns (Inkster & Ross, 1998). Zopiatis and Theocharous (2013) highlighted the benefits of a normal internship for these three parties to enhance student intentions in the H & T industry after graduation (Zopiatis and Theocharous, 2013). Students gain the experience of the real world. Academic institutions increase their reputation. Employers have the opportunities to recruit and train their potential staff. Tourism internships provide a beneficial experience for all the students, employers, and educational institutions involved.

Internship expectations and perceptions

An internship can be considered as one of the positive strategies for the schools to compete for a larger intake of students by promoting a comprehensive curriculum with an attractive internship program (Lam & Ching, 2007). According to Silva et al. (2016), internships can be used as a successful strategy to bridge theoretical knowledge and practice and enhance graduate employability. After completing their internships, there is a vast improvement in students’ ability and confidence to work with people, their knowledge of how the industry

works, their ability to adapt to changes, their leadership, and their financial management competency (Lam & Ching, 2007). Zopiatis (2007) defined that internships provide an opportunity for students to apply classroom theories to practical issues in the actual business setting, and most importantly to evaluate whether their career choice is compatible with their interests and personality. Internships are especially helpful for resourceful students who want to gain some practical experience about the work by working in a real business environment. Internships also provide the students with the necessary skills to be effective in the work environment (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012). They give the young candidates the opportunity to practice their theoretical knowledge and develop their skills and experiences within the sector (Bogdana et al., 2012). Besides, internships also help students increase their self-confidence and exposure to whether their career choice is compatible with their interests and personality (Dobratz et al., 2014). Cook et al. (2004) agree that internships aid students to gain confidence in finding employment upon graduation from college. Students become more self-assured when looking for work than before because they have had real-world practice in their industry added to their university education (Simmons, 2006). Also, industry professionals and institutions benefit by providing internship experiences (Cook et al., 2004). Students benefited from the time spent on an internship as they have gained transferable skills, enhanced their understanding of their choice, and provided a concrete link between theory and application (Bullock et al., 2009). As internships play a major role within the higher educational environment, potentially impacting students' career perceptions and aspirations, there is a change in students' perception of hospitality employment post-internship and how this impact on future career intentions from a developing country's perspective. Nevertheless, the provision of any experiential learning activity, such as a hospitality internship, does not necessarily provide a meaningful learning experience (Zopiatis, 2007). The most common factors that create negative perception of interns are found to be little or no pay, weak employee-supervisor relations, poor communication, lack of coordination and disorganized work environment, limited or no delegation, long working hours, and overall a hectic working environment (Collins, 2002; Lam & Ching, 2007). It is also argued that educational institutes fail to prepare students adequately in order to cope with the challenges and demands of work in this sector (Lam & Ching, 2007). As a result, a considerable number of graduates decide to seek employment in other sectors (Barron, 2008; Jenkins, 2001; Zopiatis, 2007). Students' experiences from their internship participation may be positive or negative depending on a number of moderating factors and their expectations (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2013).

The individual challenges

Self-confidence

The main purpose of the tourism internship programs is to prepare the students to be good implementers in real life, taking good decisions with the theoretical foundations they established during their study. Many students expect to increase their own confidence after completing their internships because self-confidence will bring them more opportunities to have new experiences. During the internships, hospitality students often are placed in positions that require them to interact with guests directly, i.e., servers, front desk staff in hotels which may cause stress to them from the first days (Lam & Ching, 2007). It will be worse if they are given positions in this field involving tasks with certain responsibilities, or they receive insufficient training because of the high season and the limited period of the internship. Therefore, the higher the self-confidence preparation of interns, the higher levels of internship satisfaction as the proposed hypothesis below,

H1: Self-confidence is positively related to internship satisfaction

Communication and conduct

For many students, effective communication skills are not their gift. Yet, in a working environment, communication and conduct are of a higher level, that is professional. Unable to "fit" into the organization's culture seems to be another concern where students find themselves having difficulty in communicating and building good relationships with colleagues (McMahon & Quinn, 1995). In addition, having social experiences with coworkers or supervisors during the internship is a great chance that may enhance interns' interest in and excitement regarding working (Hussien & Lopa, 2018). So, we hypothesize the relationship of student internship satisfaction with communication and conduct at the workplace as below

H2: Communication & Conduct is positively related to internship satisfaction.

Health

Lack of training physically and being illusioned by the gaudy appearance, students take employment conditions in the tourism sector as too hard with late working hours and long-standing shifts compared to other sectors, therefore high turnover rate is a result (Davidson et al., 2006; Fox, 2001; Richardson, 2008; Teng, 2008). Students who had bad internship experiences with running errands on motorbikes or with being carsick also leaving the sector due to not meeting the working conditions and due to the limitations on improvement opportunities. The association of internship satisfaction and trainee's health/physical condition is looked through as the below hypothesis,

H3: Health is positively related to internship satisfaction.

Problem-solving skills

The main purpose of an internship is to help students to develop their thinking, problem-solving, and communicating skills which are considered critical elements of a good education by providing them a real-world experience. In their study findings, Hussien and Lopa (2018) employed an online questionnaire to 100 hospitality students who have joined an internship program. The SEM outputs suggested academic preparedness, student self-initiatives, skills variety are crucial factors to lead to internship satisfaction. It also mentioned that the site supervisor should give interns an opportunity to carry out the work by themselves and to do different job tasks using a variety of their skills and talent. These opportunities can enhance the skills that they are going to need to solve problems and contingencies in their working environment. Consequently, we hypothesize that,

H4: Problem solving skills are positively related to internship satisfaction.

Organizational challenges

Supervision

One of the hardest challenges the sector is facing is to create certain methods to attract the skillful people and to retain them. Consideration and support of direct supervision in assigning work, mentoring and creating opportunities to interns are very important. Some employers may not be fully aware of internship objectives or may treat interns as a supplement for a labor shortage. As mentioned by Fox (2001), instead of developing potential employees through internship, many companies would only allocate people in particular areas where they need someone. Some companies may even be uncertain of what to expect from students, how to train students successfully and what skill level students should obtain during their internship period (Huyton, 1991). To assess the impact of supervision role on student overall satisfaction, Lam and Ching (2007) conducted a quantitative research through 307 valid questionnaires. The outputs show supervisor, team spirit, and especially help from supervisor led to student overall satisfaction. Therefore, the degree of supervision consideration on interns would affect the internship satisfaction like below hypothesis:

H5: Supervision is positively related to internship satisfaction.

Working hours

Specialized working conditions in the hotel and tourism industry is to deal with different customers and tasks in long hours or night shifts. Besides, Robinson and his coauthors conducted qualitative study through 34 students in hospitality in Australia in 2009 and 2010 investigating student career choices and goals after attending the internship terms. The results show it is tough to work with longer hours, longer shifts but lower wages, compared to other operation settings (Robinson et al., 2015). Consequently, it occurs the higher turnover rate which decreases the internship satisfaction and job opportunities and retention (Lam & Ching, 2007), as below hypothesis:

H6: Working hours is positively related to internship satisfaction

Working environment

Eventually, the industry faces a challenge in positioning as a more attractive career option in the eyes of youth as only around half of the tourism and hospitality and management graduates opt to be employed in hospitality positions (King et al., 2003). Despite the offering of full or limited-service properties, the working environment and working colleagues play the role of enterprise in internship satisfaction. In addition, Robinson et al. (2015) confirmed the relationship of student internship satisfaction with working environment as team spirit and autonomy. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H7: Working environment is positively related to internship satisfaction.

Student career perception

The benefits of internship terms obviously play a crucial role in enhancing student career perception as students could improve their competencies and confidence to deal with people, with complicated works, and especially their personal financial management (Lam & Ching, 2007). The complicated working conditions and challenging working experience best help interns for their career choice (Zopiatis & Theocharous, 2013), (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012). Using structural equation model (SEM) through 400 samples in Cyprus, Zopiatis and Theocharous (2013) highlighted the impact of students practice toward student intention to go further with hospitality careers even though they can work later with other industries as well based on their interests and personality. On the downside, the poor preparation from both students and educational institutes (Lam & Ching, 2007), ineffective communication, unattractive working environment with long working hours may negatively affect the perception of interns (Yiu & Law, 2012), and (Collins, 2002). Seyitoglu and Yirik (2015) examined the degree of 305 student perception on the internship. It confirmed the impact of the tourism educators, professional development on industrial perception of the students. Therefore, internship satisfaction has a close relationship with student career perception as follows.

H8: Internship satisfaction is positively related to Student career perceptions

Academic support

Seyitoglu and Yirik (2015) involved a questionnaire to 305 tourism faculty students in Turkey to determine the internship satisfaction toward the tourism educators, and professional development. The results mention internship satisfaction helps the educational enterprises build in students the professional development and industrial perception (Seyitoglu & Yirik, 2015). Besides, Hussien and Lopa (2018) examined interns' initiative based on the academic support. It is also argued that educational institutes fail to prepare students adequately in order to cope with the challenges and demands of work in this sector (Lam & Ching, 2007). It is thus crucial to explore the gaps of educators (Yiu & Law, 2012) to increase the significant effects on student internship satisfaction as the hypothesis below.

H9: Internship satisfaction is positively related to Academic support

Enterprise support

To fulfill the endless high qualified applicants in the travel and hospitality in Gurugram, Haryana, enterprise support earns its contribution (Nga & Ngan, 2018). The considerable number of freshmen seek employment in this setting from internship terms to permanent jobs (Barron, 2008; Jenkins, 2001; Zopiatis, 2007). Throughout the internship participation, students gain from positive or negative experiences relating to moderating factors and their expectations (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2013). It is therefore important to dig out for practitioners/employers (Yiu & Law, 2012) to tackle the changes required and to increase the retention rate of high qualification students in the industry by the below hypothesis.

H10: Internship satisfaction is positively related to Enterprise support

Conceptual model and hypothesis

In the research of Today's intern, tomorrow's practitioner? – The influence of internship programmes on students career development in the Hospitality Industry, Chen and Shen (2012) did prove their model of industry involvement including fair working environment and training as well as personal commitment with dedication to work and learning are essential determinants to students' satisfaction. What is more, the support from Hospitality Industry and schools are factors to decide student career development in the industry. That is why we construct H7 (working environment) to be the variable and H8, H9, and H10 in the model to be what support students expect from their academy and internship organization. In their research, Lam and Ching (2007) again cited personal challenges for students to be problem-solving ability and the organizational challenges to be supervisor's support, working hours which are our H4, H5, H6 in the model. The model of Hussien and Lopa (2018) which divides individual and organizational environments is suitable for our research. However, for this study after years of watching and interviewing the interns in Gurugram, Haryana about their personal challenges, the researchers find out three more factors H1, H2, H3 which may not be an issue at other parts of the world but students in Gurugram, Haryana mentioned them to be their challenges: Self-confidence, Communication and Health/Physical requirements. The proposed model of student internship satisfaction is as shown in Figure 1:

- H1: Self-confidence is positively related to internship satisfaction
- H2: Communication & Conduct Is Positively Related To Internship Satisfaction
- H3: Health is positively related to internship satisfaction
- H4: Problem-solving skill is positively related to internship satisfaction
- H5: Supervision is positively related to internship satisfaction
- H6: Working hour is positively related to internship satisfaction
- H7: Working environment is positively related to internship satisfaction
- H8: Internship satisfaction is positively related to Student Career Perceptions
- H9: Internship satisfaction is positively related to Academic support
- H10: Internship satisfaction is positively related to Enterprise support

Results and Findings

Testing the hypotheses related to student satisfaction with internship programs in the hospitality and tourism industry in Gurugram, Haryana. The analysis is based on survey data collected from students who have completed internships in this sector, supplemented by interviews with industry professionals and academic coordinators.

Key findings include:

1. **Self-Confidence:** High self-confidence is strongly associated with greater internship satisfaction.

- 2. Communication and Conduct:** Effective communication and professional conduct are essential for a positive internship experience.
- 3. Health:** Good health positively impacts internship satisfaction, underscoring the need for supportive work environments.
- 4. Problem-Solving Skills:** Strong problem-solving abilities contribute significantly to satisfaction.
- 5. Supervision:** Quality supervision is a crucial determinant of internship satisfaction.
- 6. Working Hours:** A balanced workload is essential; excessive working hours can lead to dissatisfaction.
- 7. Working Environment:** A supportive and inclusive work environment is key to higher satisfaction.
- 8. Career Perceptions:** Satisfied interns have more positive career perceptions and feel better prepared for future careers.
- 9. Academic Support:** Robust academic support enhances internship satisfaction.
- 10. Enterprise Support:** Organizational support and resources are vital for a successful internship experience.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges and factors affecting student satisfaction with internship programs in the hospitality and tourism industry in Gurugram, Haryana. Addressing these factors through improved mentorship, balanced workloads, supportive work environments, and strong academic and enterprise support can significantly enhance the overall internship experience for students, better preparing them for successful careers in the industry.

Conclusion

Theoretically, this research suggests a model for student internship satisfaction with challenges that students need to overcome and can overcome with good preparation in the Gurugram, Haryana context. Practically, the results and opinions collected from students through the scaling open many topics that schools can prepare for students through workshops with participation of businesses, alumni and lecturers. Besides, the results suggest other research on expectations from the businesses and how much language plays its part in bringing confidence in communication for students. Our paper has important practical implications in the qualification assurance of the education (educator) and training (employer) program. Educating and maintaining potential qualified employees in the workplace is becoming one of the crucial factors for the sustainable development strategy of institutions and organizations (Lam & Ching, 2007; Richardson, 2008). To carry out this objective successfully, educators and organizations should not only improve practical and thorough courses for training but also need to continuously support students with the challenges they have to face in the working environment and build in the skills and psychology to prepare themselves better for a satisfactory career internship. According to the results, this study suggests three practices for internship satisfaction in the Hotel and Tourism industry. Firstly, it is necessary for students themselves to update and self-trained before the internship. Not only should students prepare physically and psychologically they should also be aware of working conditions, activities, and initiatives to enhance soft skills (i.e., self-confidence, communication and conduct, and problem-solving skills). Physical requirement of the career is a must, students should recognize early to train themselves.

Secondly, educators and organizations should prepare longer and better for internship training programs also. Students in Gurugram, Haryana still have difficulties in effective communication and problem solving. These skills can be provided through workshops and activities at schools. Besides, enterprises should be more willing in helping their potential co workers/subordinates to adapt to the policies and regulations at the workplace (i.e., supervision, working hours, and working environments). From the above result, trainers/employers need to give proper preparation in terms of survey, workshops, internship allocation, receiving feedback and sharings to internship students – future employees – to create more chances for them to apply the trained knowledge and skills from school.

Thirdly, according to the effect of internship satisfaction, although understanding the motives and difficulties of interns in both trainees and trainers (including academy and enterprise) is important, highlighting student career perception in Hotel and Tourism leads to a stronger desire of employees to stay long with the profession. Thus, our finding suggests that a simultaneous application of both individual and organization concern is better than one of these alone. For example, in addition to the fact that institutions should prepare the proper knowledge and skills of training programs for the internship satisfaction of students as potential employees, people/management should have an innovative policy to support new employees in the H & T industry and others.

Limitations and further studies

Although this study likely fulfills the research gaps mentioned in the introduction section, this study also contains limitations which will be room for further research.

Firstly, following Lam and Ching (2007), a leading role in organizing internship programs is institutions to involve students and employers to participate in the planning stage to consolidate a training program for

students. This argument has not been discovered by previous studies in this context. Thus, further study is suggested to explore the additional effects of institutions on internship satisfaction.

Secondly, Zopiatis and Theocharous (2013) propose an internship model from pre-internship, actual internship, post-internship, and future intention to pursue a hospitality career upon graduation that highlights the supervisor's role for a success intern as an independent variable influencing training practices (Zopiatis and Theocharous, 2013). This means that policies to develop internship satisfaction may play the roles of indirect and direct effects on student intentions; on this, there is a lack of published articles. Therefore, it is important to carry out a study that will explore the indirect influence of supervision assistance on internship satisfaction, such as longer intention in the Hotel and Tourism industry or better support of enterprise.

In addition, limitations also included the limited sampling frame with only four Hotel and Tourism schools participating in this research. Therefore, the outputs could not be generalized to other samples in other contexts properly. Future studies should involve a bigger number of sample sizes and Hotel and Tourism institutions to minimize potential bias in the account of expectation and satisfaction.

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