Student's Motivations Affecting Career Intention in Hospitality Industry

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ABSTRACT

This research identified the motivation factors that affect the career intention in the hospitality industry of the students of the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. A total of 363 responses were collected using convenience sampling. A correlational analysis was employed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and family support on career intentions in the hospitality industry. This study contributes to the understanding of the motivation factors that may influence students in the hospitality industry to enhance their careers in the same field. From a practical standpoint, the hospitality industry requires talent that has skills in the hospitality industry, and higher institutions in Malaysia have offered many courses related to the industry. However, the shortage of skilled workers is still happening, especially when students who graduated from the hospitality industry prefer to be involved in other industries rather than working in the field. This study provides valuable insights for higher institutions in Malaysia to boost students' interest and increase their employability in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Hospitality, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, family support, career intention.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Malaysia is now moving to the improvement level. The Malaysian higher education system has grown from strength to strength over the past few decades. Over the last ten years alone, the

system has made significant gains in student enrolment, risen in global recognition on key dimensions such as research publications, patents, and institutional quality, as well as become a top destination for international students. One of the objectives of Malaysia's higher education stated in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 – 2025 is on human capital development which focuses on producing graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to meet the demands of the job market and contribute to Malaysia's socio-economic progress (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

Malaysia has come a long way in developing its higher education sector and is now home to 20 public universities, 36 polytechnics, 1 04 community colleges and 437 private higher education institutions (PHEls) (Grapragasem et al., 2014). To further develop the higher education agenda, MOHE introduced the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (2007-2020) in 2007 and the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2 (Beyond 2020). Both plans were introduced to create a conducive environment that promotes academic and institutional excellence and boosts internationalisation (Azman at al., 2014).

The Hospitality and Tourism curriculum has been undergoing development for decades. Hospitality and tourism education had its beginnings in technical or vocational schools. Recent years have witnessed the rise and development of hospitality and tourism education at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This development resulted from the rapid growth and demand of the tourism industry, leading academic institutions and universities to establish or expand their hospitality and tourism programmes. Tourism education continues to develop based on the original emphasis on technical or vocational knowledge and skills development. Along with the higher demand from the tourism business sector, many undergraduate-level hospitality and tourism curriculums are placed under the scope of hospitality and/or tourism management. In addition, business knowledge and skills are embedded within the curriculum (Malaysian Qualification Agency, 2019).

In line with the growth of the services industry, Faculty Hotel and Tourism Management actively provided skilled workers in this industry. The number of enrolment students in this faculty is increasing annually (University Teknologi MARA, 2024). Even though the number of students is increasing, however, the hotel industry in Malaysia still facing a shortage of laboratories in the industry which makes the industry take the action of shortening the length of stay customers at the hotel.

According to Rudd et al. (2014), hospitality programmes aim to equip students with practical experience and international competencies that are essential for success in the industry. The objective of hospitality management programmes in higher education is to nurture proficient individuals who possess the ability to handle diverse situations in the context of hotels, restaurants, or tourism-oriented enterprises. Hence, it is critical to have programmes that incorporate learner-centred practices to help students prepare for such scenarios. According to Kuo et al. (2011), it is imperative for educators to not only improve practical skills but also design specialised courses to train professionals who can effectively lead the industry.

Meanwhile, in the hospitality industry, several issues pertaining to graduate employability are highlighted. The current issues of guests needing to check in late and early checkout bring the issues to the industry. According to the hoteliers, the check-in time needs to be late 4 and the check-out time at 11 am due to limited time for the housekeeping process to clean the room due to limited numbers of workers. This indicates the issues of graduate employability in the industry (Malaymail, 2024). According to Moo & Wan (2023), the issues of graduate employability are various including minimum wages, income inequalities, job stability, and security in the context of contractual or gig work arrangements.

The employer perspectives highlighted that there is a gap between what the job market requires and the graduate's competencies after completing their degree (Nadarajah, 2021). Accordingly, there is an obvious mismatch between expectations in the job market and local graduates in term of specific employability skills in Malaysia. The graduates are most competent in Basic ICT skills, leadership skills, teamwork, and time management. However, the job market skills requirements are communication skills and analytical skills. Therefore, the issues of graduate employability need to be addressed from both students and employer perspective.

As there are several issues pertaining to graduate employability in Malaysia, it is important to understand the student motivation to pursue hospitality and the growth of hospitality education. It will help educators develop training initiatives and address skills limitations among hospitality workers. It will also provide insights into the number of hospitality students graduating in Malaysia, ensuring the industry remains

attractive. The objective of this paper is to examine the relationship of motivation factors towards student career intention in the hospitality industry. The research framework of this paper is illustrated in Figure 1
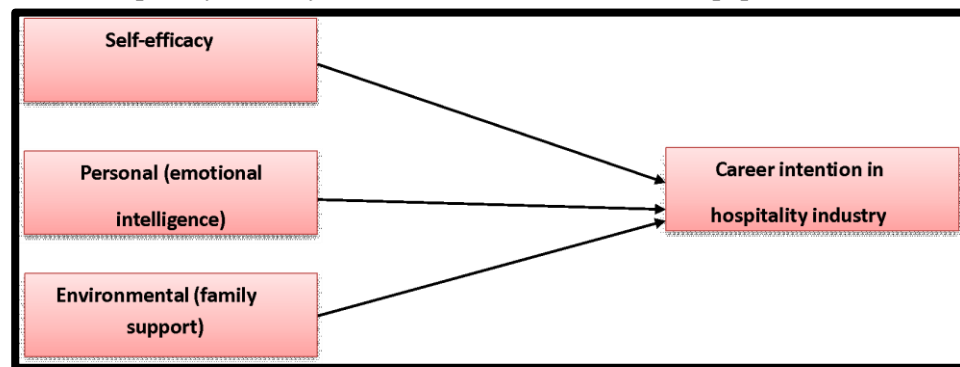

Figure 1: Research Framework

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The hotel industry is equally thriving and expanding, and as a result, it offers a diverse selection of job opportunities. Education is one of the most important factors to consider while informing people about a successful career in this field. It has been determined, through an analysis of previous research that has been carried out on the topic of education in the hospitality sector, that education is necessary for the continued growth and success of the industry (Ivančić et al., 2022)

Education concerning tourism has expanded at a rather rapid rate, following the expansion of the industry currently. Educational institutions have a responsibility to emphasise several important skills to develop tourism graduates who have the potential to find outstanding and successful employment in the future working environment (Shariff, 2021). According to the findings by Shariff (2021), the educational curriculum in the tourism industry must provide training in skills that are relevant to the profession. It was also stated that practical skills, planning and organising abilities, and other transferable skills should be incorporated into the tourism education course curriculum.

Study related to career development, the theory of social cognitive career (SCCT) is widely used and more applicable to the current boundaryless era (Wang et al., 2022). The theory indicates that the role of individual cognitive variables (self-efficacy and outcome expectations), learning experiences, and personal interests on career development, SCCT focuses on not only environmental but also individual factors that influence one's career decision making (Sheu & Bordon, 2017). Hence, this study focuses on individual and environment factors that influence the career intention in hospitality industry.

2.1 Career Intention

The application of social cognitive career theory highlighted that self-efficacy and social situation influence the behaviours of people (Dos Santos, 2021). The study conducted by Lee et al. (2021) revealed a noteworthy finding: career adaptability exhibits a dual nature, wherein the association between career adaptability and turnover intentions is influenced by social support. The hotel sector poses various problems that greatly influence the career paths of its personnel. The literature extensively documents several antecedents affecting Frontline employees' turnover intentions in tourism and hospitality sectors like inadequate compensation, unpredictable work schedules, weekend and holiday shifts, a lack of training, and restricted prospects for career progression (Nguyen et al., 2023). This indicates the various determinants that affect the career path in the industry. However, it is required to examine the individual cognitive variables (Self efficacy and emotional intelligence) and external environment (Family support) does influence the career interest in hospitality industry.

2.2 Self-Efficacy

Academic self-efficacy pertains to the beliefs and attitudes that students hold regarding their capability to attain academic accomplishments, along with their confidence in their abilities to perform academic tasks and comprehend the lessons proficiently (Schunk et al., 2000). People who have high levels of self-efficacy usually believe that their failures are due to not putting in enough effort rather than lacking the necessary

skills. Conversely, those with poor self-efficacy prefer to attribute their failures to their limited abilities (Kurbanoglu et al., 2010).

Career self-efficacy can serve as an intrinsic motivator, empowering individuals to persevere through setbacks and navigate career decisions with confidence. The objective of education is to cultivate pertinent competencies that enable individuals to confront their vocational decisions. The discourse surrounding learning strategies and their impact on academic performance, particularly grades or achievements, is a prevalent area of research (Wang et al., 2022).

For the past two decades, self-regulation has been regarded as a crucial theory in the realm of social cognitive theory (Panadero, 2017). The process is defined by three separate behavioural phases that depend on an individual's internal motivation: the forethought phase, the performance phase, and the self-reflection phase (Liu et al., 2011). It is a cyclical process. Self-regulated learning is a cognitive process that enables students to take charge of their learning objectives and behaviours. It involves actively acquiring knowledge and skills through various strategies and techniques (Wang et al., 2022).

Hence, this highlighted that cognitive (self-efficiency) is important in affecting people's behaviour. This study aimed to investigate the impact of students' cognitive abilities (self-efficiency) on their intention to pursue a profession in the hospitality business.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between cognitive (self-efficiency) and career intention in the hospitality industry.

2.3 Personal – Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1995) were the first to introduce the concept of emotional intelligence in the scientific literature. The notion was characterised as the capacity to observe and discern both one's own and others' emotions and sentiments, to distinguish them, and to utilise this knowledge to direct one's thoughts and behaviours. The capacity to observe and comprehend one's own, including others' sentiments and emotions, was fundamental to the notion of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence as a capability becomes increasingly significant in unpredictable circumstances since unpredictable and dynamic events become exhausting and might easily lead to a drain on psychological resources. This is why emotional intelligence is so crucial in unpredictable scenarios. Career intention, such as in this case, is an example of a circumstance characterised by unpredictability and dynamism. The challenges include difficulty in starting, making professional decisions in a very uncertain environment, making strategic choices, and developing implementation methods for job search (Pan et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2006). Prior research on professions has shown that individuals with high emotional intelligence (EI) are more adept at enduring and handling the inevitable fluctuations that frequently arise in a job (Goleman, 2021).

This indicates that emotional intelligence among students is important and may influence their behaviour. Therefore, this study examined the influence of emotional intelligence on career intention in the hospitality industry.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and career intention in the hospitality industry.

2.4 Environmental – Family Support

The importance of family in professional development is generally recognised and has been found to influence the decision-making process in careers (Greenhaus et al., 2012). The current collection of research on work-family interactions has revealed many elements that impact the degree to which work decisions are impacted by familial considerations. The elements may be classified into three primary drivers: social, organisational, and individual (Masterson et al., 2015).

Family involvement pertains to the significance of the family in an individual's life, which can lead to internal pressures to allocate more efforts towards fulfilling familial responsibilities and meeting the expectations associated with one's family role (Richardson et al., 2012). The prevalence of extended working hours among executives is an important familial factor to consider. The pursuit of a senior executive position in the majority of large multinational corporations in contemporary times inherently impedes the attainment of a genuine equilibrium between familial responsibilities and professional obligations (Richardson et al., 2012). Similarly, Lima et al. (2012) discovered that younger executives in

Brazil exhibited higher levels of dissatisfaction compared to their older counterparts with regard to work overload and levels of stress. Maintaining a work-life balance amidst familial expectations presents significant challenges.

The significance of family-related factors in the decision-making process of expatriate employees increased in proportion to their level of family responsibilities (Magnini, 2009). This relationship was particularly pronounced when considering the balance between work and family obligations, with a stronger emphasis on parenting young children compared to those with older, grown children.

Therefore, in hospitality education, family support may influence the student's behaviour in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry. This study examined the influence of family support on career intentions in the hospitality industry.

H₃: There is a significant relationship between family support and career intention in the hospitality industry.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlational design to examine the relationship between student attitudes and career intentions. A cross-sectional approach was used to capture data at a single point in time using the correlation research design. The study focused on individual-level analysis to identify variables enhancing student motivation.

The target population consisted of 5635 undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management at UiTM. The sample size required is 327(Krejcie & Morgan 19720) and this study was able to collect 363 responses using convenience sampling. The convenience sampling is employed due to it is not costly, not as time consuming as other sampling strategies, and simplistic (Stratton, 2021). Therefore, it is chosen as the sampling procedure in this study. The online distribution of a structured questionnaire is employed and it consists of five sections covering demographic profiles, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, parental career behaviour, and career intentions, based on 5-point Likert scales.

The pilot test was conducted with 33 respondents and the reliability result found that the least Cronbach's Alpha has a reliability of 0.812, while the maximum is 0.902. This indicates the items used in this study are reliable to be examined. The finding was analysed using the descriptive statistics of respondents and Pearson correlation to examine the relationship of the variables.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the sample consists of 363 individuals, with a higher proportion of females (63.1%) compared to males (36.9%). In terms of age, the majority of participants are in the 21-23 age group (59.8%), followed by 24-26 years (36.1%), and a small number are aged 18-20 (4.1%). Regarding education, most participants hold a Diploma (56.2%), while the remaining 43.8% have obtained a degree. This profile suggests a predominantly young, female sample, with a fairly even distribution between diploma and degree holders.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Per cent
Gender	Male	134	36.9
	Female	229	63.1
Age	18-20	15	4.1
	21-23	217	59.8
	24-26	131	36.1
Education	Diploma	204	56.2
	Degree	159	43.8

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Table 2 highlights the descriptive of four variables used in this study. The first variable of career intention showed a mean value between 3.6776 to 3.9973. The range of standard deviation is between 0.73622 to 1.02590. The second variable is self-efficacy showed the Mean scores range from 3.80 to 4.09, indicating high self-efficacy with fairly low variability (standard deviations around 0.73 to 1.08). The third variable of Emotional Intelligence showed the mean scores are generally high (3.89 to 4.58), showing a strong belief in emotional intelligence abilities, with a relatively low variability (0.68 to 1.04). The final variable of family support has Mean scores ranging from 3.73 to 4.04, indicating good levels of perceived family support, with moderate variability (standard deviations between 0.76 and 1.03).

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of variables

Variables		Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Career intention	CI 1	I wish to enter the hospitality industry following graduation.	3.6776	0.86318
	CI2	I intend to enter the hospitality industry following graduation.	3.9973	0.88364
	CI3	I have always planned to enter the hospitality industry following graduation.	3.9290	1.02590
	CI4	I intend to enter the hospitality industry rather than other industries.	3.8033	0.73622
Self-Efficacy	SE1	I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself.	4.0902	0.84404
	SE2	When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.	4.0492	0.84256
	SE3	In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.	3.9536	1.07552
	SE4	I believe I can succeed in any endeavour to which I set my mind.	3.7978	0.73099
Emotional Intelligence (Personal)	EI1	I know when to speak about my personal problems to others (Schutte et al., 1998).	4.5792	0.68487
	EI2	When I face obstacles, I remember times when I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.	3.8907	1.03584
	EI3	I have control over my emotions.	4.0137	0.98333
	EI4	I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.	3.9536	0.72567
Family Support	FS1	My parent encourages me to try new things.	3.9617	1.02765
	FS2	My parent encourages me to choose whatever career I want.	3.8661	0.93989
	FS3	My parent encourages me to make my own decisions.	3.7322	0.76527
	FS4	My parent helps me feel better when I tell him/her I am worried or concerned about choosing a career.	4.0355	0.8767

4.3 Hypothesis testing

Table 3 highlights the correlation between all the variables examined in this study. The Strongest correlation with Family Support (r = 0.728, p < 0.01), suggests that participants with higher family support are much more likely to have stronger career intentions in the hospitality industry. Meanwhile, The Moderate correlations between Emotional Intelligence (r = 0.421, p < 0.01) and Self-Efficacy (r = 0.388, p < 0.01). This indicates that participants with higher emotional intelligence and self-efficacy also tend to have stronger career intentions, though the relationship is weaker than with family support.

The variable of self-efficacy showed the correlation with Career Intention is positive (r = 0.388, p < 0.01), meaning that higher self-efficacy is moderately associated with stronger intentions to enter the hospitality

industry. The variable of emotional intelligence showed a correlation with Career Intention ($r = 0.421$, $p < 0.01$) suggesting that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in shaping career intentions. Finally. Family support showed the strongest correlation overall with Career Intention ($r = 0.728$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting family support as the most significant factor influencing participants' career intentions in this study.

Family support has the highest correlation with career intention (0.728), showing it plays a key role in shaping participants' career choices. Meanwhile, Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are also positively correlated with career intention, though their influence is moderate. The result showed that All variables are positively correlated with one another, and these relationships are significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that as one variable increases, the others tend to increase as well, reflecting interconnectedness among career intentions, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, and family backing.

Table 3: Correlation analysis of variables

		Career Intention	Self – Efficacy	Emotional intelligence	Family support
Career intention	Pearson Correlation	1	.388**	.421**	.728**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	363	363	363	363
Self – efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.388**	1	.396**	.352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	363	363	363	363
Emotional intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.421**	.396**	1	.298**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	363	363	363	363
Family support	Pearson Correlation	.728**	.352**	.298**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	363	363	363	363
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

4.4 Discussion

This study examined three motivators affecting career attention among students from the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management in the hospitality industry, namely self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and family support. Based on the three determinants, emotional intelligence and family support had a significant impact on the student's career decision-making.

The result of this study showed that family support has a high relation towards career intention. As indicated by Greenhouse et al., (2013), family significantly affects the student's career intention. This study also showed that parents' guidance, advice and role models influence student's career intentions. The young generation nowadays are depending on the advice by their family in choosing their career. Therefore, in order to attract young generation to pursue career in hospitality industry, the parents must have knowledge and awareness towards the potential of this industry,

Meanwhile, the self – efficacy and emotional intelligence also have a relationship with career intention even though they have moderate results. This supported the study by Wang et al., (2020) that indicates that student's motivation includes their self-regulated on their behaviour. This study indicates that students are still low on their self-efficacy in making decisions. Young generations nowadays need to tighten their self-efficacy, to have their strong confidence level in order to be in the industry. The result showed that the young generation need to have the strong self-efficacy and the industry through the internship during the study need to increase the student's motivation level and self confidence in order to make them survive in the industry.

Similarly, emotional intelligence showed moderate effects. Goleman (2021) highlighted a strong leader requires strong emotional intelligence. This study showed that students still have moderate emotional intelligence which may affect their career intention in the hospitality industry. The young generations need to tighten their emotional intelligence in order to pursue career in hospitality industry. The students need

to know the ways to control their emotions, learn to motivate themselves and know how to handle the difficult situation. All these criteria are important towards sustaining students in hospitality industry.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study enhance our comprehension of students' motivation to pursue a profession in the hotel business. This study justifies the vital motivators affecting the students' choice to work in the hospitality industry. The students in the hotel sector are the crucial individuals who will shape the industry's future. Therefore, their choice in career decision-making in the hospitality industry is important to examine.

This study confirmed the three motivators that affect students' career decision-making in the hospitality industry. As the demands on the hospitality industry are growing nowadays and there is a shortage of employees and expertise in the industry, students should foster confidence, improve interpersonal skills, and provide essential emotional and practical support. Their career choice in the hospitality industry will have many benefits, including the sustainability of the industry by employing local people rather than foreigners. Future research can focus on other variables that may become the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors for the hospitality industry. Similarly, students in the hospitality industry need to strengthen their emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to make them choose the best career decision-making.

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