

DETERMINANTS AFFECTING CAREER INTENTION AMONG HOSPITALITY STUDENTS

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Abstract - This research study identified the motivation factors that affect the career intention in the hospitality industry in Malaysia. A total of 366 responses were collected using convenience sampling. A regression analysis was employed to examine the research model and its proposed hypotheses. The findings revealed that the students' self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and family support influence their career intentions in the hospitality industry. This study contributes to our understanding of the motivational 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 - Career intention, hospitality, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, family support

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality sector is widely considered to be highly vulnerable to adverse exogenous variables such as abrupt fluctuations in the economic landscape, climate variability, and financial downturns. The hotel and tourism industry exhibits distinct structural characteristics when compared to other business sectors. Singal (2015) identified several characteristics that are commonly associated with this industry, such as significant capital intensity, intense competition, elevated risk, and substantial leverage.

According to Bantanur et al. (2015), universities bear a societal obligation to offer direction to their students, faculty, staff, and administration, and their choices have an impact on the economic, social, and environmental aspects of communities and regions. Universities must equip their students with the necessary skills to effectively apply their acquired knowledge to address new challenges and make meaningful contributions towards the creation of a dynamic society that can effectively realize sustainable development objectives. It is imperative for universities to proactively engage in community outreach efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development.

According to Rudd et al. (2014) and Schossfall and Brown (2021), hospitality programs aim to equip students with practical experience and international competencies that are essential for success in the industry. The objective of hospitality management programs 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 programs that incorporate learner-centered practices to help students prepare for such scenarios. According to Kuo et al. (2014), it is imperative for educators to not only improve practical skills but also design specialized courses to train professionals who can effectively lead the industry.

The susceptibility of the hospitality industry to unfavorable external factors, such as changes in economic conditions, variations in climate patterns, and financial contractions, is significant (Kuo et al., 2014). The organization has undergone substantial worldwide expansion, which has resulted in the need to hire more staff to sustain its ongoing development. Professionals possessing advanced multitasking abilities are highly sought after in the industry, and the career paths chosen by graduates have a notable impact on the distribution of workers in the upstream sector (Rudd et al., 2014). Hence, universities must provide their students with the essential competencies to tackle emerging obstacles and make valuable contributions to a constantly evolving society.

The global trends of hospitality education showed a steady increase in student enrolment globally despite the inherent vulnerabilities, volatilities, and constraints. The challenges of the pandemic covid – 19 reshaping hospitality education. The COVID-19 pandemic not only shook the industry but also brought about a drastic change in the trajectory of students' enrolment in tourism and hospitality education, leading to plenty of institutions witnessing very few admissions(Jha & Mishra, 2024). Accordingly, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the landscape of motivations driving students toward tourism and hospitality education in India has witnessed a significant transformation, leading to a discernible decline in enrolment rates in these programs. This shift in student preferences is influenced by various factors affecting their perceptions of the industry and career prospects.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, students are motivated to pursue a career in the industry for a variety of reasons. According to a study by Lestari & Rosman (2024) that examines factors of Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation, Career exposure, and third-party influences toward career goals in the hospitality industry, the result showed that This study concludes that hospitality undergraduate students' intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation have a positive relationship with their career goal. Similarly, the result of the data analysis found that career exposure and the influence of third parties are also positively associated with hospitality students' career goals. This indicates the global phenomena of hospitality education that focuses on students' motivation and preferences towards the industry.

In Malaysia, hospitality education is highlighted in the Malaysia Education reform(MEB 2015-2025). Due to the flexible nature of the hospitality sector, educational institutions must adapt to the pandemic's effects on business models, recruitment, competition, and industry structure. The primary objective of hospitality management programs is to provide students with practical exposure and global competencies that are crucial for success in the field. The impacts of the Pandemic Covid - 19 and government regulation through the Malaysia Quality Assurance (MQA) standard and Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) have impacted the quality of hospitality education in Malaysia and therefore provide a better curriculum for the program related to hospitality programs.

The importance of hospitality management programs is accepted worldwide. Many courses related to hospitality management have been taught in Malaysian universities, such as hotel management, tourism management, culinary and food service management. This indicates the importance of hospitality education in Malaysia and worldwide. Hospitality and tourism education is widely offered and imparted at colleges, polytechnics, and universities in Malaysia, with enrolments of around 35,000 students nationwide at 26 institutions(Hussain et al., .2020)

Consequently, the issue of graduate employability has become a matter of significant concern, garnering serious attention from the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), Ministry of Human Resources, and scholars (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). Graduate Statistics 2020 released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) showed that the unemployment rate among degree and diploma graduates increased by 0.5% to 4.4% in 2020, compared to 3.9% in 2019. The labor market remained uncertain during the pandemic, which further increased the unemployment rate by 0.1% to 4.9% in January 2021 compared to 4.8% in December 2020 (Tatt, 2021).

Other than the pandemic, according to Ngoepe & Theron(2023), hospitality graduates are declining job offers or rejecting work opportunities in hotels and are changing career paths in search of better working conditions in other industries due to their expectations not being met by the industry. The hospitality industry is rather a complex and diverse sector, facing many challenges, relating to high levels of employee turnover, low productivity, poor remuneration, demanding working conditions, and limited opportunities for personal development (Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019), as well as disruptive technology and new applications to sell more (Jiane & Wakelin-Theron, 2023).

This study aimed to fill the gap in understanding student and graduate employability trends, 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 objectives of this paper are:

- To identify the motivational factors that influence career intention among hospitality students in the hospitality industry.
- To determine the primary factors that influence career intention among hospitality students in the hospitality industry.

The research framework of this paper is illustrated in Figure 1

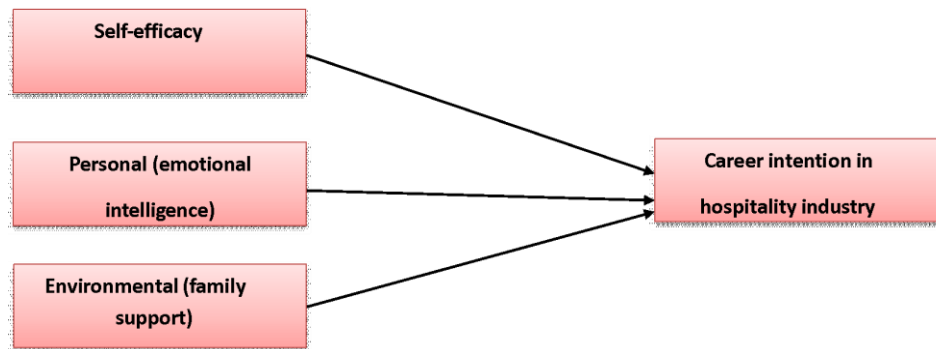


Figure 1 : Research Framework

METHODS

This study employed a causal study to examine the significant factors influencing attitudes toward careers in hospitality. A cross-sectional approach was used to capture data at a single point in time. Although the methodology demanded considerable time, effort, and financial resources, it was efficient and cost-effective, leveraging survey questionnaires to reach a broad respondent pool. Conducted in a natural setting, 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, with a required sample size of 327 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). In this study, data were collected from 366 participants via an online survey from December 2023 - Feb 2024. Non-probability sampling was employed due to its simplicity and cost-effectiveness. The survey, available in English and Bahasa Malaysia, consists of five sections covering demographic profiles, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, parental career behavior, and career intentions, based on validated scales. The five Likert scale is used in this study as it is most widely used in various social studies and it can map respondents' choices into five clear options, ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly(Tanujaya et al.,2022). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Regression analysis using the SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study sample comprised 366 participants, with 36.6% male (134 participants) and 63.4% female (232 participants). The age distribution was primarily between 21 and 23 years (59.3%, 217 participants), followed by those aged 24 to 26 (36.1%, 132 participants), and a smaller group aged 18 to 20 (4.1%, 15 participants). There were also two outliers aged 42 and 44, each representing 0.3% (1 participant each). In terms of education, 55.7% of the participants (204 participants) hold a diploma, 43.7% (160 participants) have a degree, and there is one participant (0.3% each) with a Master's degree and a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Perc ent
Gender	Male	134	36.6
	Female	232	63.4
Age	18-20	15	4.1
	21-23	217	59.3
	24-26	132	36.1
	42	1	0.2

	44	1	0.3
Education	Diploma	204	55.7
	Degree	160	43.7
	Postgraduate	2	0.6

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Career Intention

Table 2 summarises the responses for four items that measured career intention to enter the hospitality industry following graduation. The means for these items ranged from 3.68 to 3.99, indicating a generally positive inclination towards a career in hospitality. The item "I intend to enter the hospitality industry following graduation" (CI2) had the highest mean of 3.9973 and a standard deviation of 0.88364. This indicates a generally high level of agreement and slight heterogeneity among responses. The statement "I have always planned to enter the hospitality industry following graduation" (CI3) exhibited the greatest variability, as indicated by a standard deviation of 1.02590. Conversely, the statement "I intend to enter the hospitality industry rather than other industries" (CI4) demonstrated the lowest variability, with a standard deviation of 0.73622. On the whole, the responses suggest that the respondents had a positive but diverse inclination to pursue a profession in the hotel industry.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of career intention

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

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for eight items measuring self-efficacy. The means of these items ranged from 3.7978 to 4.0902, suggesting generally high self-efficacy among the respondents. The item "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself" (SE1) had the highest mean at 4.0902, with a standard deviation of 0.84404, indicating high agreement and moderate variability. The item "When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them" (SE2) also had a high mean (4.0492) and similar variability (standard deviation of 0.84256). The item "Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well" (SE7) showed the greatest variability with a standard deviation of 1.08994. On the lower end, "I believe I can succeed at most in any endeavor to which I set my mind" (SE4) had the lowest mean (3.7978) and a relatively low standard deviation (0.73099), indicating more consistent responses. Overall, the data suggest strong self-efficacy beliefs among the respondents, with some items showing more variability than others.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of self-efficacy

VARIABLES		ITEMS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
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 endeavor to which I set my mind.	3.7978	0.73099
	SE5	I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.	3.9290	0.73308
	SE6	I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.	3.8333	0.81229
	SE7	Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.	3.9672	1.08994
	SE8	Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.	3.8852	0.75703

Emotional Intelligence (Personal)

Table 4 provides descriptive statistics for eight items measuring personal emotional intelligence. The means of these items ranged from 3.6667 to 4.5792, indicating generally high levels of emotional intelligence among the respondents. The highest mean was observed for "I know when to speak about my problems to others" (EI1) at 4.5792 with a low standard deviation of 0.68487, suggesting strong agreement and low variability. Conversely, the item "I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others" (EI5) had the lowest mean (3.6667) and a higher standard deviation (0.96704), indicating more varied responses. "Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living" (EI4) showed the greatest variability with a standard deviation of 1.08994, while "I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them" (EI8) had a high mean (4.2541) and the lowest variability (standard deviation of 0.62234). These results suggest that the respondents generally perceived themselves as emotionally intelligent, particularly in recognizing when to discuss personal issues and understanding others' feelings through observation.

Table 4: Descriptive analysis of emotional intelligence

VARIABLES		ITEMS	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
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	Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.	3.8033	0.91537
	EI4	Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.	3.9672	1.08994
	EI5	I present myself in a way that makes a positive impression on others.	3.6667	0.96704
	EI6	I have control over my emotions.	4.0137	0.98333
	EI7	I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.	3.9536	0.72567
	EI8	I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.	4.2541	0.62234

Family Support (Environmental)

Table 5 provides descriptive statistics for eight items that measured family support concerning career decisions. These items had mean values ranging from 3.6038 to 4.4672, indicating generally high levels of perceived family support among respondents. The item "My parent encourages me to talk to him/her about my career plans" (FS5) had the highest mean at 4.4672, with a low standard deviation of 0.74228, indicating strong agreement and low variability. Conversely, the item "My parent has shown me where to find information about colleges or careers" (FS8) had the lowest mean (3.6038) and also the lowest standard deviation (0.70527), indicating more consistent responses. The item "My parent encourages me to try new things" (FS1) showed relatively high variability with a standard deviation of

1.02765, while "My parent tries to understand my thoughts, feelings, and opinions about various topics" (FS7) had a high mean (4.1585) and moderate variability (standard deviation of 0.79521). Overall, these results suggest that the respondents perceived significant support from their parents in their career decision-making process, with particular encouragement to discuss career plans and support when expressing specific career interests.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of family support

Variables		Items	Mean	Std Deviation
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
	FS5	My parent encourages me to talk to him/her about my career plans.	4.4672	0.74228
	FS6	My parent has supported me when I have told him/her that I am interested in a specific career.	4.2459	1.06227
	FS7	My parent tries to understand my thoughts, feelings, and opinions about various topics.	4.1585	0.79521
	FS8	My parent has shown me where to find information about colleges or careers.	3.6038	0.70527

Hypothesis Testing

Given that this study was a causal one, its variables were examined using simple linear regression analysis. Kumar et al. (2013) asserted that basic linear regression can be used to examine the association between the independent and dependent variables.

The study employed regression analysis to determine the primary elements that had a substantial impact on career intention in the hotel industry, aligning with the research purpose. This study employed multiple regression techniques to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the correlation between the independent variables (self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and family support) and the dependent variable (career intention).

Table 6 displays the regression model's findings, emphasizing its robustness and explanatory capacity. The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.656, showing a reasonably significant positive association between the independent and dependent variables. The coefficient of determination, denoted as R Square, had a value of 0.431. This indicates that around 43.1% of the variability in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the independent variables incorporated in the model. The Adjusted R Square, which took into consideration the number of predictors in the model, was somewhat lower at 0.426. This suggests that the model had the same explanatory power while also considering the possibility of overfitting. The standard error of the estimate was 0.34155. It estimates the average deviation of the observed values from the regression line, providing a measure of the accuracy of the model's prediction. In general, the model showed a strong correlation with a significant amount of variability accounted for; however, there is still potential for enhancement.

Table 6: The regression model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.656 ^a	.431	.426	.34155

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Support, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy

b. Dependent Variable: Career Intention

Table 7 presents the regression analysis results for predicting career intention using self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and family support as independent variables. The unstandardized coefficients indicate the direction and magnitude of the effect of each predictor. The constant (intercept) was 0.835, with a significant t-value of 4.308 ($p < .001$). Self-efficacy had an unstandardized coefficient of -0.026, a standard error of 0.055, and a t-value of -0.483, with a significant p-value of .000, indicating a negative but negligible and statistically significant effect on career intention. Emotional intelligence had a positive unstandardized coefficient of 0.259, a standard error of 0.054, and a significant t-value of 4.811 ($p < .003$), suggesting a moderate positive impact on career intention. Family support showed the strongest effect, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.558, a standard error of 0.054, and a highly significant t-value of 10.374 ($p < .000$), indicating a substantial positive influence on career intention. The standardized coefficients (Beta) indicate the relative importance of the predictors, with family support (Beta = 0.500) being the most influential, followed by emotional intelligence (Beta = 0.295), and self-efficacy (Beta = -0.033). Overall, the model suggests that family support and emotional intelligence were significant positive predictors of career intention, while self-efficacy had a small but significant negative effect.

Table 7: Multiple regression analysis

Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.835	.194	4.308	.000
	Self-Efficacy	-.026	.055	-.483	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	.259	.054	4.811	.003
	Family Support	.558	.054	10.374	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Career Intention

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.

Self-efficacy in this study showed that it is significant for career decision-making in the hospitality industry however the negative and very small Beta value indicates that the effect size is minimal, and this negative relationship is likely to have very limited practical significance. According to the research conducted by Zhuo et al. (2023), Hu (2019), and Wang et al. (2016), there was a strong association between college students' professional decision-making self-efficacy and their employability. The study found that students with higher self-efficacy tend to have better employability prospects. Zhuo et al. (2023) found that students who have a higher level of career decision-making self-efficacy are more likely to actively participate in career planning. This, in turn, improves their ability to make career decisions and reduces employment challenges for college students. Additionally, it boosts their confidence in making career decisions and ultimately enhances their employability. However, in this study, the significant value was lower, which indicates that more efforts are required to increase students' self-efficacy, which may enhance their career decisions. The student's self-efficacy is lower hence it affects their career decision. Therefore,

more efforts are needed to increase student self-efficacy to make them have a strong personality to be involved in the industry.

The second factor, emotional intelligence, in this study showed a significant influence on career decision-making. According to Zhuo et al. (2023), individuals with elevated emotional intelligence exhibit superior emotional regulation and interpersonal connections, fostering the university students' development and achievement and effectively contributing to society. It is essential to cultivate positive emotional intelligence for a person's career success. This result is also consistent with Zhuo et al. (2023), as well as She and Hu (2021), which indicate positive emotional intelligence towards career decision-making. This study showed that students have high emotional intelligence, which may affect their choice of career in the hospitality industry.

The third component of family support also has a substantial influence on career decision-making in the hospitality business. Voutera et al. (2020) highlighted that family support indirectly influences career choice implementation by providing both encouragement and resources, thus enhancing the students' confidence and ability to pursue their desired career paths. Meanwhile, These findings suggest that career interventions should consider family influences as a crucial factor in helping students make informed career choices. This study also supports the idea that family influences affect career choices in the hospitality industry. The reason for family support might be to look at the role of the family in giving encouragement, support, and understanding for their children to pursue study in their areas of interest. This helps to provide emotional support for the students to pursue their careers in the hospitality industry,

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study enhance our comprehension of students' motivation to pursue a profession in the hotel business. This study justifies that the vital motivators affecting the students' choice to work in the hospitality industry are due to emotional intelligence and family support meanwhile self-efficacy shows a minimal impact. 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.

This study examines three factors only showing the limitations of variables that were used in the study. Additionally, the subject in this study is also limited to one Higher educational institution only showing the limited generalizability of the study. Finally, the limitation of methodology that only focuses on quantitative methods is another concern in this study. Future research should explore the motivation of students using the qualitative method to get more insight from the local perspective. Meanwhile, more variables should be examined towards career choice based on the input from the qualitative part. Finally, the subject of this study should be more than one Higher education institution and if possible intercountry to look at the trends of hospitality education worldwide.

The result of this study will shape the preliminary analysis of career choice among hospitality students in Malaysia. Higher education institutions can take the initiative to encourage the motivation of students in career choice in the programs that they enroll in the universities. The organization can provide career counseling programs, and job placement for the final year students as well as programs that provide students with tools to enhance their employability, increasing their motivation to succeed in the job market. This will increase the self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of the students in their career choices in the hospitality industry.

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